

HOUSING

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ENGLAND'S PROGRAMME FOR ENDING OVERCROWDING

I ask you to imagine yourselves with all your appetites and passions, your bodily necessities and functions, your feelings of modesty, your sense of propriety, your births, your sicknesses, your deaths, your children—in short, your lives in the whole round of their relationships with the seen and the unseen, suddenly shriveled and shrunk into such conditions of space. I might ask you, I do ask you, to consider and honestly confess what would be the result to you.

DR. JAMES BURN RUSSELL of Glasgow

We have waited 40 years for a really practical attempt to be made to cope with the serious evil of overcrowding in the dwellings of the poor. At last that day has arrived. A great country is now showing the way out of this morass.

As part of a comprehensive and constructive programme of dealing with its housing problems, the present British Government is proceeding according to plan and has now reached that stage in the development of that programme where it is ready to take up the great evil of room overcrowding.

This is the third stage of the present Government's Housing Programme. The First was to insure an adequate supply of new houses by setting free the hands of private enterprise and allowing it to function once more. The Second was a gigantic drive to eliminate slums from England through a comprehensive plan of slum clearance. Now, the Third part of that programme is announced in a constructive and practical effort on a large scale to remedy for all time overcrowding in the dwellings of the people of England.

When two years ago the Minister of Health, Sir Hilton Young, announced the Government's determination to wipe out England's slums, it was foreshadowed that, when this task was well under way, the Government would address itself to the difficult problem of overcrowding.

About a year ago, in addressing a meeting of the Association of Municipal Corporations in London, Sir Hilton Young indicated in a

general way the Government's intention of dealing with this problem, stating that the Government was ready to accept the principle that prevention of overcrowding is a matter for the State as well as for the Local Authorities, and that a bill was then being prepared which would provide for a subsidy from the Government to the Local Authorities to meet the expense of Local Authorities in rehousing the overcrowded population. In making this announcement, he said:

We propose to proceed in our new housing measure to a direct attack upon the evil of overcrowding that will follow up and fulfil the direct attack on slums. We start from this principle: that overcrowding is no longer to be allowed, and that all measures must be taken by the Government and the housing authorities that are necessary in order to enable the new principle to be made effective and to be kept effective. It will be a great task, and one that cannot be performed in a short time; but it is a task that can be performed.

He went on to inquire what are the measures necessary for this purpose and pointed out that first, they must have a clear mind as to what is meant by overcrowding; next, that it must be decided by a survey exactly how much overcrowding there was and where it was; and that then they must do what is needed to provide dwellings enough to house the overcrowded people; and, when they have been rehoused, to prevent future overcrowding by the firm enforcement of laws against it.

Some months later in an address at Plymouth the Minister gave further details of what was about to be proposed in dealing with overcrowding. In January, the details of the Government's programme were announced and the text of the new Housing Bill,* to be pushed through Parliament during the present session, was made public.

WHAT THE BILL DOES

The principal proposals in this measure that deal with overcrowding may be summarized as follows:

1. It sets up *Standards* as to what constitutes overcrowding.
2. It makes it a *Punishable Offense* to exceed those standards in any dwelling occupied by the working classes.
3. It requires a *Survey* to be made by the Local Authorities of every area in England to ascertain every case of overcrowding in the country.

* Bill 19. House of Commons, Dec. 20, 1934.

4. It grants *Subsidies* from the Central Government to the Local Authorities to enable them to provide the new accommodations necessary to rehouse the de-crowded population.

5. In the central parts of cities it contemplates re-housing the de-crowded population in *flats* instead of cottages.

6. On expensive sites it recognizes the need of building *higher buildings*—but not over 4 stories.

7. It stresses the need of housing large parts of the population *near their work*, and the fact that there must always be a considerable urban population.

8. It permits Local Authorities to create “*Re-development Areas*” in connection with rehousing in the central parts of cities—practically replanning the central parts of cities.

9. It deals with overcrowding in *rural areas*.

A statement from the Ministry of Health made public upon the reconvening of Parliament early in January pointed out the need and purposes of the measure in the following terms:

The main concern of the Bill is to deal finally with the evil of overcrowding. This is a problem as obdurate as that of the slum; and in some ways more intractable since it is found typically in wide areas in the built-up centres of large towns, where it is hopeless either to treat it in small sections comparable to slum clearance areas or to abate it by providing additional houses on available sites some miles away. Tentative and fragmentary efforts to control it—by bylaws or otherwise—have so far signally failed.

THE MEASURE OF OVERCROWDING

The new Bill adopts a fundamentally new method, which goes straight to the root of the problem. First, it defines what is to be adopted as the country's standard of overcrowding; then, subject to safeguards it makes it a punishable offense to exceed that standard in any dwelling. And—most important of all—it provides for a survey by the local authority of every area the object of which is to identify every case of overcrowding in the country. It provides, also, for the production—subsidised when necessary—of the new accommodation necessary to abate it now and prevent its recurrence.

What is the new standard? First, in every house the number of occupants will have to be small enough to allow of proper separation of the sexes, apart from husband, wife and children under 10. Subject to

this, the number permitted to each house will be that shown in the following table:—

SCALE 1

Where a house consists of—	the permitted number of persons is—
(a) One room.....	2
(b) Two rooms.....	3
(c) Three rooms.....	5
(d) Four rooms.....	7½
(e) Five rooms or more.....	10 with an additional 2 in respect of each room in excess of 5.

FLOOR AREA—NOT CUBIC CONTENT THE CRITERION

But number of rooms is not in itself a sufficient criterion, unless size is also taken into account. If rooms are below normal size the permitted number of occupants will be reduced. The following table is, therefore, also to be applied; and whichever gives the lesser number of persons will determine the permitted number:—

SCALE 2

Where a room in a house has a floor area of—	The permitted number of persons is—
(a) 110 sq. ft. or more.....	2
(b) 90 sq. ft. or more, but less than 110....	1½
(c) 70 sq. ft. or more, but less than 90....	1
(d) 50 sq. ft. or more, but less than 70....	½
(e) Under 50 sq. ft.....	Nil.

In applying the standard, children under 10 will be counted only as half persons; children under 1 year will not be counted at all. To meet special cases temporary licence to exceed the standard may be given by the local authorities; and to meet the needs of specially difficult areas, the standard may be modified by the Minister of Health on the advice of the new Housing Council for a prescribed period when necessary.

THE OCCUPIER AND OWNER BOTH RESPONSIBLE

It will be for the occupier to see that the maximum for his house is not infringed; and the landlord is also liable if he has reason to know of actual or likely infraction and does not take reasonable steps to rectify it. But actual proceedings can be taken only by the responsible local authority—a safeguard against unreasonable enforcement before

other suitable accommodation is ready. To reinforce this safeguard, it will be a good defence—unless other suitable accommodation has been offered and refused—to show that all those living in a house were there when the standard came into force and have been there ever since, or are children born to them or growing up since that date.

In short, existing occupants are protected until other accommodation is ready.

Future occupants will also be protected if the breach of the overcrowding standard arises only from the fact that a child passes its first or tenth birthday and their efforts to find other accommodation have been unsuccessful.

SURVEY OF OVERCROWDING

The basis of the new measure is that this new accommodation shall be provided without delay, in the right places at the right rents. This will be the duty of the local authority of each district. First, the exact scope and situation of the need to be met must be ascertained. The Bill adopts the only way of doing this dependably—a direct survey by each local authority of its own district. The survey completed, they will report to the Minister of Health the extent of the need and their proposals for action to meet it; and it will be their duty at once to take steps to implement these proposals. Time limits will be allowed for each local authority, according to the scope of their problem. The task is a very large one, and they have to be given wide new powers to make it practicable.

RE-DEVELOPMENT AREAS

The most important of these new powers will be exercised in “redevelopment areas”. The core of the overcrowding problem is in the centres of the larger towns, where badly developed and congested areas are crowded with people who must be near their work, who can afford only low rents and who have never been helped by all the post-war subsidised efforts to rehouse them further afield in new housing estates. Central sites of any size are seldom available, and the problem has seemed insoluble. It will now be tackled by treating areas of this kind as a whole, and planning their redevelopment throughout—re-arranging, as necessary, the layout of roads, shops, open spaces and factory sites and obtaining on the re-arrangement space for flats of modern design to house the working class population on the spot under decent and healthy conditions. The local authorities will draw up these re-development plans, submit them to the Minister of Health and be responsible for carrying them into effect. This they will do partly by purchasing the land in the area, partly by entering into arrangements

with owners for development in accordance with the plan, according to the local circumstances. Compulsory purchase powers may be exercised and compensation at market value will normally be paid.

SUBSIDY FROM THE GOVERNMENT

Land will be allocated under redevelopment plans for the necessary rehousing in flats. Building upwards in flats is inevitable in many cases, though costly. Generous Exchequer (Treasury) subsidy will be given. This will be at the rate of from £6 a year for each flat for 40 years—where the site costs more than £1,500 and does not exceed £4,000 an acre, with a sliding scale of increases where the cost is higher. The local authority will also contribute in each case an amount equal to half the Exchequer subsidy.

For the more ordinary overcrowding cases, apart from the severe cases calling for redevelopment, the rapid provision of flats or houses on suitable sites will also be undertaken. Subsidy will be available for this too, wherever the Minister of Health is satisfied that to provide the houses at a suitable rent would involve an undue burden on the district—taking into account the resources of the tenants, the need to provide an unusually large proportion of houses for large families and the money already spent by the local authority on housing in relation to their resources. This subsidy may be anything up to £5 a house or flat for 20 years, and a corresponding contribution not exceeding £2.10s. will be paid in each case by the local authority.

RURAL OVERCROWDING

The problem of the rural areas has received special attention. Where houses for the agricultural population are necessary to relieve overcrowding, the Minister of Health will be able to contribute anything from £2 to £8 a house for 40 years to their provision. For this he will act in consultation with a new Advisory Committee, to be appointed for the purpose.

In addition, the 1930 Act subsidies for Slum Clearance are continued and will be available whenever redevelopment involves the demolition of unfit houses, as well as for slum clearance.

The two main divisions of the housing problem in which drastic public intervention and public subsidy are required are slum clearance and the abatement of overcrowding. These two together represent, at bottom, the whole task still to be done before public interest can rest. The first is already in hand; a five year programme for the total abolition of the slums and the building of some 300,000 replacement houses is well in its stride, and progress is ahead of expectation.

The new Bill now completes the picture by providing powerful machinery for tackling the second and tackling it radically and in a limited time. Its methods are drastic, but the need more than justifies them; and they are carefully framed to secure equity in application. If the Bill is looked at with the Slum Clearance Act of 1930 and the other Acts governing housing, it will be seen not only to complete a logical pattern but to profit by and emphasise a lesson which has been driven home too well by the earlier post-war housing measures.

That lesson, briefly, is that the root evils of bad housing conditions are not to be exercised by the indiscriminate building of new houses. They can only be reached by a concentrated policy of directly relating rehousing work—both in situation and in rent—to specific ascertained areas to be cleared or decrowded. This, universally applied, will eliminate the slum and overcrowding just as and where it exists. No other policy will do so.



The British Government's nation-wide attack on the evil of overcrowding is thus seen to make it a punishable offense for more than 2 persons to occupy a single room; for more than 3 persons to occupy 2 rooms; or for more than 5 to live in 3 rooms. It forbids boys and girls over 10 years old to sleep in the same room—as is done in thousands of over-crowded British homes at the present time. It also fixes the minimum sizes of rooms that may be occupied by a given number of persons.

This programme contemplates the rehousing of every family in England which today lives in overcrowded conditions. And where there are not sufficient accommodations to receive them at rents they can afford to pay, the bill provides a scheme by which the Local Authorities throughout England are expected to provide new accommodations of the right kind for families now living under these improper conditions.

As a means of accomplishing that end, the Government is prepared to pay a subsidy to the Local Authorities to enable them to accomplish this purpose.

THE REDEVELOPMENT AREAS

What is likely to prove the most important feature of the bill and one which involves ultimately the replanning of the major part of most of the great cities of England—that is, so far as the residential quarters are concerned—lies in the scheme of the so-called “Redevelopment Areas”.

The heart of the overcrowding problem the Government rightly finds to be in the centers of the larger towns. It recognizes that no matter how desirable from an ideal point of view it may be to encourage the growth of Garden Cities and to urge decentralization of the urban population, the fact remains that the great mass of the people now living in cities, not only in England but in all countries, live there because they prefer to live there—some because they have always lived there; others because they like urban life; others because they want to be near their work; others because their friends and all the things that make up living for them are to be found in those neighborhoods. Many of them would be utterly miserable if transplanted to such delightful communities as Letchworth or Welwyn.

Recognizing this fact, the Government proceeds to deal with the problem in realistic fashion.

Obviously, Local Authorities cannot order people out of their present dwelling places just because they are living under overcrowded conditions, unless there are other dwelling places available to which they can go.

The providing of such alternative accommodations is consequently made a vital part of the Government's plan of dealing with overcrowding. Before people can be ordered out of their existing overcrowded dwellings, there must be sufficient accommodations available at rents which they can afford to pay and in neighborhoods where they can afford to live.

In any large town—which is defined by the bill to include the "city" of London, the remainder of the County of London, a county borough and a non-county borough or urban district having a population of 50,000 or more—if the Local Authorities find that there is an area within their community containing 50 or more working class houses and that one-half or more of such houses are overcrowded or unfit for human habitation and are not capable of being made fit at reasonable expense, they may redevelop the area in question, provided they consider it the kind of area that should be used for the housing of the working classes and one which they think should be redeveloped.

Under these circumstances the Local Authorities must pass a resolution declaring the area in question to be a proposed Redevelopment Area and within six months must submit to the Minister of Health a plan for the re-laying out of the area.

If the redevelopment scheme is approved by the Minister, the Local Authorities then proceed with the redevelopment, acquiring the necessary land either by purchase or through condemnation, and building

upon the sites thus redeveloped the kind of housing accommodations which the Local Authorities deem to be best suited to their purpose—either cottages or flats. It is not contemplated that flats as a rule shall exceed 3 stories in height—though exception is made for cases where flats may be built as high as 4 or even 5 stories. Although there has been a good deal of talk about the necessity of building up in the air in redeveloping central sites on high-priced land in the center of cities, the present Government has no thought of building skyscraper flats or tenements.

It is thus seen the bill contemplates what is practically the replanning of large parts of the cities of England—a gigantic town-planning scheme such as hitherto has not even been dreamed of.

Wisely, the Government does not look with favor upon piece-meal replanning of these sections but realizes fully that the problem must be grappled with by treating areas of this kind as a whole, and planning their redevelopment throughout—re-arranging as may be necessary the lay-out of streets, shops, open spaces and factory sites and obtaining by this re-arrangement suitable plots for the building of flats of modern design to re-house the working class population, at the same time making necessary provision for such new streets and other open spaces, such shops and factory sites as the needs of the neighborhood, determined scientifically, would seem to require.

As a means of facilitating this re-development of the central parts of the cities, the Central Government contemplates granting a subsidy to Local Authorities which will be based on the cost of the land that has to be re-developed and upon which new housing accommodations will be built.

These subsidies, through a 40-year period, are to be at the rate of from £6 a year for each flat thus built, where the sites cost the Local Authorities more than £1500 an acre and do not exceed a cost of £4000 an acre, with a sliding scale of increases where the cost is higher than this amount. An equal subsidy must be contributed by the Local Authorities in such cases.

Where redevelopment schemes involving radical replanning of parts of cities are not involved, but it is necessary for the Local Authorities to provide new housing accommodations in order to accommodate the persons now living in overcrowded homes, a subsidy from the Central Government to the Local Authorities is also to be provided. This is to be whenever the Minister of Health is satisfied that to provide houses at a rent within the means of the overcrowded population would involve an undue burden on the district. What con-

stitutes an "undue burden" is left to the discretion of the Minister of Health who in the Parliamentary discussion of the proposals has indicated in general terms what his conception of these circumstances is.

When the Government's present programme is carried out, under this scheme of "Re-development Areas" whole areas of London and other big cities will be transformed. Districts where no new houses have been built since Queen Victoria's time, it is expected, will blossom like the rose with new modern flats.

WHAT CONSTITUTES OVERCROWDING

Overcrowding is defined in two ways. It is declared to exist where 2 persons, 10 years old or over, of opposite sex except husband and wife, must sleep in the same room. It also is held to exist where there is—in relation to the number of rooms and the floor area of which the whole dwelling unit consists—an excess of the number of persons permitted as defined in the schedule of permitted occupancy that is made part of the Bill. There are two such schedules; one deals with the number of rooms and number of people permitted to occupy the dwelling unit which contains that number of rooms; the other table deals with floor areas and is a schedule showing the number of persons permitted to occupy rooms in which the floor area is not less than the amount shown in the schedule. Rooms under 50 square feet are not to count as rooms; and rooms not normally used in the locality as living rooms or bedrooms are not to be included among rooms permitted for such occupancy.

The bill imposes a double condition. Both schedules are to be operative in every case and whichever permits the less number of persons is to be the one that has effect. Babies under a year old are not counted as persons; and a child between 1 year and 10 years is counted as half a person—not that the Ministry is contemplating emulating Solomon and dividing children in two, but for statistical purposes he is dealing in practical and realistic fashion with conditions known to exist. And so, averages which do contemplate half persons must be considered. It is obvious that a child 3 years of age does not need the same amount of floor space or air space as an adult. Hence a proper differentiation is made.

As will be seen from the accompanying schedules, not more than 2 persons may sleep in one room, nor more than 3 persons in 2 rooms, nor more than 5 persons in 3 rooms, nor more than $7\frac{1}{2}$ persons in 4 rooms, nor more than 10 persons in 5 rooms, with an additional 2 persons for each room over 5 rooms. In counting the number of rooms,

living rooms are included as well as sleeping rooms; for, it is recognized that among the working class population in great centers such as London and other large cities, it is a common condition of living for members of the family to sleep in the living room.

The term "living room" applies to both parlors and to full-sized kitchens, but not to the more customary kitchen in England found in the older houses in the form of a small scullery or working kitchen. This is not included in the schedule.

The inclusion of the living room is one feature of the proposal which seems to be drawing most of the criticism in the public discussion that has followed the introduction of the bill in Parliament. Strong public sentiment has been expressed that this marks too low a standard and that the rooms should be limited strictly to rooms designed for sleeping purposes—that is, bedrooms.

THE FLOOR AREA BASIS

The floor area standard marks a departure in dealing with the problem of room overcrowding. Hitherto—not only in England but in the United States and in other countries as well—the yard-stick has been the cubic content of rooms. There are many advantages in such a yard-stick. We venture to suggest that three elements should enter into the standard—the number of persons per room, the floor area of the room and the height of the room, which gives cubic content.

There are many rooms with low ceilings, attic rooms—especially in the old private dwellings now so badly overcrowded and with which this bill seeks primarily to deal—where it is not appropriate to permit as many persons to sleep as in rooms of full height. Similar conditions are found, too, in many basement rooms where ceiling heights are much too low to allow as many people to occupy such rooms as would be permissible in rooms on the upper floors.

We commend to the attention of the Government the desirability of including as a yard-stick the height of rooms or their cubic content, in addition to the other elements now proposed—not as a substitute for floor area.

BOTH TENANT AND OWNER RESPONSIBLE

Responsibility for overcrowding of dwellings will rest primarily upon the occupier or tenant of the rooms found to be overcrowded; but responsibility will also rest upon the owner or landlord. The landlord's responsibility is very properly limited to cases where he has actual knowledge of overcrowding contrary to the standards imposed

by the new law and does not take reasonable and proper steps to rectify the situation where it is within his control.

The duty of remedying overcrowding of rooms rests properly upon the Local Authorities. No prosecution can be had except upon their initiative; and even they are limited and not permitted to proceed against an occupier or owner for overcrowding unless other suitable accommodations for the family where the overcrowding exists are available. Such "suitable accommodations" means accommodations that not only fall within the standards of the number of people that may be permitted in a given number of rooms but at rents within the means of the persons involved.

Recognizing the great variety of conditions that are to be found, and in order not to work hardship by unnecessarily inflexible standards and requirements, the bill contains a very considerable degree of elasticity and specifically provides for exceptions under which existing conditions may be continued. The Local Authorities may authorize the temporary use of a dwelling by more than the number of persons permitted under the Act. In addition, the Minister of Health may also grant such permission in certain areas where exceptional conditions prevail.

In prosecutions for overcrowding, the bill specifically provides that it shall be a penal offense—unless other suitable accommodation has been offered and *refused*—to show that all those living in a house were there when the standard came into force and have been there ever since, or are children born to such families or who have grown up since that time.

As a means of making the Local Authorities realize their responsibility for doing away with overcrowding in their communities, in addition to placing full responsibility upon them for the enforcement of the law, the bill specifically imposes on Medical Officers of Health the duty of furnishing the Minister of Health each year with full particulars as to overcrowding in their respective localities.

THE EXTENT OF OVERCROWDING

How great the overcrowding in England is, and how serious the evils that result from it, will not be fully disclosed until the Survey contemplated by this Bill is completed; but sufficient facts are known to indicate that there is a large amount of overcrowding in that country and that very serious evils have resulted from it—conditions of living being forced upon the people that are not conducive to the development of a great race. That the English people have to so great an extent overcome and surmounted these evils is everlastingly to their credit.

Some indication of the extent of that overcrowding is disclosed by the Census taken every 10 years in England. In the published figures of the Census for 1931 the Registrar General reports the following facts:

There are over 2,000,000 persons living 2 to a room.* There are 50,000 families living at a density of 4 or more to a room. There are 180,000 families living at a density of 3 or more to a room. There were found to be 390,000 families, about 1,500,000 persons, living in overcrowded conditions. In Scotland, 1,638,786 persons—35% of the entire population—were living more than 2 to a room, and nearly 750,000 were living more than 3 to a room.

The National Housing and Town Planning Council—one of England's leading housing organizations and a most effective agency for better housing in England—has from time to time called attention to specific cases of serious overcrowding, not only in special reports rendered on the subject but in their periodical reports.

The following are a few examples of the kind of conditions brought to light by Medical Officers of Health in different cities of England. These are so general that they have almost ceased to horrify the British public—although that public is now thoroughly aware of the shocking conditions that exist and is determined to put an end to them:

ILLUSTRATIVE CASES OF OVERCROWDING

WEST HAM

1. House containing 3 bedrooms, 1 sitting room and kitchen has 16 occupants.
2. Parents and 6 children living and sleeping in 1 room—father is tuberculous.
3. Parents and 5 children living and sleeping in 1 room, upstairs; downstairs tenant complains of closeness of air and unpleasant odors—constant illness in house.
5. Parents and 5 children living in 1 room—father and eldest child both suffering from tuberculosis.

DERBY

1. "I have 1 bedroom for my husband, self and 3 children. I am expecting another baby, and will find it very awkward with children in the same room."
2. "I have been in 1 room for 4 years with my husband and boy 3 years old. I am expecting again in September, and cannot possibly stay here."
4. "At present we are sleeping in 1 room (including 3 beds and 3 children), altogether 6 persons. I have had sanatorium treatment for tuberculosis."
5. "I live in a small 2-roomed house, and there is only 1 bedroom. My husband, myself, and 5 children all sleep in this 1 room."

* The term "room" as used in the British Census has an exact connotation. It means a usual living room and does not include kitchenettes and such auxiliary accommodations as sculleries, lobbies, landings, closets, or bathrooms. The scullery which is a small English working kitchen is generally found with such rooms, so that persons "living in a single room" are really living in a single bed-living room with a small kitchen in which the meals are prepared and the necessary work in connection with the processes of living is performed.—Editor.

WIGAN

1. House containing 2 living rooms and 2 sleeping rooms occupied by 24 persons—10 adults and 14 children.
2. House containing 2 living rooms and 2 sleeping rooms occupied by 7 adults and 10 children—17 persons in all.
3. House containing 2 living rooms and 2 sleeping rooms occupied by 16 persons—7 adults and 9 children.
4. House containing 2 living rooms and 2 sleeping rooms occupied by 15 persons—7 adults and 8 children.
5. House containing 2 living rooms and 2 sleeping rooms occupied by 13 persons—7 adults (1 of whom was an expectant mother) and 6 children.

OVERCROWDING IN ELIZABETH'S DAY

Sir F. Fremantle in the discussion of this bill on Second Reading in the House of Commons called attention to the fact that overcrowding was not a new thing—that three and a half centuries ago in Queen Elizabeth's time it was recognized that overcrowding was the chief thing that had to be dealt with. In 1580 a Royal Proclamation against tenements was issued which read as follows:

Yet where there are such great multitudes of people brought to inhabitate in small roomes, whereof a great part are seene very poore, yea, such as must live of begging, or by worse meanes, and they heaped up together, and in a sort smothered with many families of children and servantes in one house or small tenement, it must needes followe (if any plague or popular sickness shoulde by Gods permission, enter amongst those multitudes) that the same would not only spread it selfe and invade the whole city and confines, as great mortalitie should ensue to the same.

THE ATTACK ON OVERCROWDING

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH'S SPEECH

In explaining the Government's purposes in introducing its Housing Bill Sir Hilton Young, the Minister of Health, made the following statement in the House of Commons on January 30th, last, with regard to this measure and its primary purpose—to attack the evil of overcrowding.

On this occasion Sir Hilton Young spoke as follows:

The Bill is one which takes a definite step in a great social reform which is urgently required by the conscience of the nation. The very foundations of our civilisation and its hope of progress are to-day our concern.

"Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

Unless the homes of the people are sound the work of the watchmen over public health, education and other similar services must, indeed, largely be in vain. In the course of the last

few years I have had wonderful opportunities in the discharge of my office of acquainting myself with the conditions of national housing—opportunities which I could wish every member of this House had shared—and I have been struck by the extraordinary strength of the instinct for the improvement of the home, an instinct which seems really to be cultivated by the difficulties it has to overcome.

How often has one noticed that it is in a slum or in an overcrowded house where one sees the finest example of the struggle on the part of the mother and the father of the family to produce decent and desirable conditions under which their children may grow up.

It is, I believe, common ground among all Members of the House that there is much that is amiss with the housing standards and conditions of the people. In the old days before the industrial revolution there was some standard of propriety and of hygiene in accordance with the ideas of those early times—at least as regards the urban population. As regards the rural population there was much to be desired.

After the industrial revolution we had enlightened standards as to what was best in housing, based upon scientific knowledge and particularly the great advances in medical science. But between those two stages in our development there came the industrial revolution—that great eruption of national energies—when attention was centered elsewhere and there was too little regard for the housing which was being provided.

In consequence of the lack of forethought and the lack of care during that period of great national emergence, our national equipment of housing grew up very largely too haphazard and we are at the present time suffering from the evil legacy of that period of our national career.

We have inherited from those bad days in our housing history two outstanding evils—the evil of the slum and the evil of overcrowding. There are too many houses that are not fit to live in; and of the houses that are fit to live in there are not enough to go round, and any national effort for the betterment of conditions to be rightly directed must be directed against those two evils in particular.

SLUM CLEARANCE THE FIRST STAGE

The Government's programme for dealing with those evils has accordingly been developed in two stages. The first stage was the stage of the development of the campaign against slums. That campaign has been launched, and successfully launched.

The organisation period is over and we are now seeing the first results of the actual work based upon the period of organisation. I have said that the launch has been successful and I will give with satisfaction to the House the most recent figures as to the work actually accomplished. In the course of the last two years for which I have full records the number of people for whom re-housing arrangements were to be undertaken amounted to 300,000.

At the end of the year, if we are to reckon by rates of progress, we were progressing 30 times more rapidly than the rate at which we were progressing in slum clearance before the campaign was undertaken. The most recent figures, not yet published, in the housing return show a continuance of that state of affairs. During the month of January the number of new houses for the re-housing of slum dwellers, which were approved for immediate construction, was 5,000—a rate of progress of 60,000 houses per year.

In view of those figures, I can give the House the assurance that it will require from any Minister of Health during the continuance of the 5 years programme from time to time. The programme is continuing so successfully that it promises that we shall achieve the full effort of rehousing 1,250,000 people within the five years. I only refer to that fact to-day because it is the successful launching of that campaign, and its successful interpretation into actual effort, which enables us to proceed to the second stage with which we are concerned to-day, namely, the direct attack upon the evil of over-crowding.

THE ATTACK ON OVERCROWDING THE SECOND STAGE

The House will require few words from me to emphasise the importance of that second stage. Health and happiness in the home are concerned more than anything else with adequate space and accommodation.

All medical science tells us that it is human life in overcrowded conditions that is the fertile soil in which diseases grow—epidemic diseases and particularly the white scourge of tuberculosis—and that there is no single improvement that can be effected for the elimination of disease of more importance in its material effect than enabling people to sleep at proper spaces from each other.

As regards the actual overcrowding, those who have visited people in their homes know of many instances of families living in overcrowded conditions of 4 or 5 persons in a room. What happiness can there be under such conditions?

What a prospect for the man when he goes home from his work in the evening! What a burden it casts upon the mother of the family in keeping conditions right and wholesome under such a state of affairs! Even apart from happiness, how can the ordinary decencies of life continue, so long as we tolerate such a condition of things in our society? I need not, however, labor that aspect of the question.

Let me say a few words on the magnitude of the problem. We do not know how big the problem of reducing overcrowding is—and we shall not know until we have carried out the survey—but if anyone is inclined to doubt that it is a big problem let him consult the recent return of the Registrar General and he will find what the problem is. I would refer to overcrowding in its most severe forms. In its most severe forms we see from that return that there are 50,000 families living at a density of 4 or more to a room. There are 180,000 families living at a density of 3 or more to a room. Those are the most severe forms and they inflict the greatest hardships upon those who live under such conditions.

Although the problem is great, we must be encouraged to believe from the figures that the problem is by no means unmanageable. It is by no means beyond the resources of the State, by a great effort, to deal with it. So much for the amount and the size of the problem.

Let me say a word about a most important aspect of it; and that is, the characteristics of the overcrowding. Unless we realise the conditions of overcrowding we shall not find the true remedy. We shall all recognise that the most salient characteristics of the worst evils of overcrowding are its associations with the central areas of our towns, built in the 18th and the first half of the 19th century.

THE CONGESTED PARTS OF CITIES

It is in the regions of mean streets, built before due regard as to housing standards arose in our minds, where overcrowding is characteristically present—the inner and older areas of our towns—with mean streets badly developed, a wasteful layout of the land, which, according to modern ideas, are neither proper from the point of view of amenities, nor economic from the point of view of housing the maximum number under proper conditions. It is with these central areas in particular that we have to struggle.

We have failed to grapple with this problem in the past, largely, because we have failed to recognise that you cannot remedy overcrowding unless you are prepared to find the means for re-housing a

large proportion of the dwellers in these central areas near the scene of their original home.

We have sought to cure the evil by providing dwellings at a distance. I am certain that that policy will not work. People are tied to the scene of their original homes by the necessity of being near their work, and it is a burden on the economic resources of the State in the way of additional transport charges to move them away.

But they are also tied by all the social associations of residing near their friends and families and every effort, therefore, to remedy these conditions must be an effort which will have due regard to that central condition. Such are the outstanding characteristics of the problem that we have to solve.

Let me pass now to the practical measures by which we seek to apply a solution—the plan of campaign for attacking the evil of overcrowding. We must notice what an extremely illusory thing overcrowding is.

It differs in this from slums. You can recognise a slum house by its bricks and mortar, you cannot fail to recognise it; but overcrowding might occur in one place and then in another.

Therefore the first essential for an effective remedy for overcrowding is that it should be universal over the whole country at one time so that you will not drive overcrowding from one place and allow it to occur in another.

The second essential condition for a remedy is that we must not be content with mere pious aspirations and indirect action but be ready to back our plan with the whole force of law—to enforce it by law—so that we shall be certain that the money which is spent will secure the result which we desire to achieve.

Before I explain to the House, to the best of my ability, the nature of the measures proposed, let me say that there have been prolonged and close discussions with the local authorities who will be responsible for the work. Discussions more full and free—and, I believe more frank—have never taken place before on any Government Measure, and they have had the most useful result in an improvement in the design. I should like to pay my tribute of thanks to the Associations of local authorities who have been concerned.

As a result of these discussions we have arrived at a substantial measure of agreement on the general outlines of the Bill. In this connection it has been interesting to me to see the criticisms of the Bill which have been advanced by the most important single local authority—the London County Council. I should not expect

unduly favorable treatment because the London County Council has assumed a complexion more sympathetic to hon. Members opposite.*

A STANDARD OF OVERCROWDING ESTABLISHED

In laying down a plan of campaign, the first essential is to arrive at a standard of what overcrowding is—to lay down a national standard of accommodation. The overcrowded house has been an offense ever since 1850, but it has been impossible to enforce the offense, because there has been no definition of what overcrowding is; and, secondly, because there has been no alternative accommodation.

A national standard of accommodation has been arrived at in agreement and in consultation with the housing authorities and with medical officers of health all over the country. It has two foundations: decency—the separation of the sexes over 10 years of age; and space—that there is enough accommodation for each person.

If hon. Members will look at the First Schedule they will see that the method of arriving at the standard is to say there shall be so many persons per room and then to correct that by reference to rooms below a certain size. That standard will require the most careful examination by the House.

On this occasion I would only make this observation, that the standard which we lay down now need not be regarded as the ultimate ideal to which we should work. The standard which we lay down now is one upon which it is possible to begin to get this reform under way, and I propose it as a reasonable and practical standard on which to base the commencement of our labors.

It will be necessary to preserve a due measure of elasticity in the standard at first, because if we made it too rigid it might break down. Hon. Members will find in the Bill a provision for ensuring a certain elasticity in the standard.

In the first place, the Minister of Health can make temporary extensions in the standard for districts which—owing to their particular conditions—cannot be readily fitted into the national standard at once. The particular conditions may be that there is in a particular neighborhood a large proportion of especially big rooms, as there is in some parts of London.

But as this is a matter which closely affects the national conscience—and to make sure that the exercise of the Minister's discretion is not arbitrary—we propose that extensions of the standard shall be laid down on the advice of the new Housing Advisory Committee that is to be called into existence.

* *The Labor Party—Editor.*

The second provision for elasticity is to enable local authorities to deal with particular cases where hardship would arise by a rigid enforcement of the standard, by means of licenses—in such a case as that of temporary residents or the influx of workmen into a neighborhood for temporary work, when permanent accommodation need not be provided.

A SURVEY OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

After laying down a national standard of accommodation the next necessary step is to survey the conditions in order to ascertain where and to what extent there is overcrowding in excess of that standard. This survey will be carried out by the housing authorities and will give us for the first time an accurate knowledge of the extent of the evil with which we are dealing and the steps which are necessary for its remedy.

In the smaller areas it may take only a few weeks but in the larger areas more time will be taken. Under the Bill there is power given to the Minister to fix the time in which each authority, according to its conditions, must complete the survey.

After the surveys the next step will be the presentation of schemes by the local authorities for dealing with all overcrowding, as ascertained by their surveys, by the provision of the accommodation which it is necessary to find for those who are overcrowded.

On that I will emphasise the following points. The initiative is with the local housing authorities. They alone have the knowledge necessary to put forward practical schemes. It will be for them to say how many dwellings are required, where they are required, and of what kind, whether they be flats or houses. The general control exercised by the Ministry will be only to make sure that their schemes are efficient and meet the needs of their case. The initiative for the schemes must be with the local authorities.

FLATS FOR THE CENTRAL AREAS

I mention in that connection the requirements in respect of flats and point out the following consideration. There is no prejudice in my mind—or in the mind of the Government or that of the Ministry of Health—in favor of flats. On the contrary, it is recognised that there are parts of the country which have a strong prejudice against them.

I quite recognise that is the case. I, myself, believe that prejudice to be based upon the fact that the original blocks of workers' dwellings and blocks of flats which were first constructed in the slums were

thoroughly bad—badly designed, badly laid out and did not make proper provision for air and space and the amenities of life. I find, however, that wherever the good modern flat has been introduced that prejudice breaks down.

It is impossible for one who has not studied the subject to realise what enormous strides have been made in the technique of flat construction even in the course of the last 10 years. I venture to say that today the modern well designed flat to many families means more of a dwelling than does a small house. I say there is no prejudice in their favor; but the logic of facts has to be recognised.

It is impossible to make use of the central areas to which I have referred—where overcrowding is characteristically present—to their full economic extent without building to some degree upward in the form of blocks of flats. You cannot make economic use of the space without such building. Let it not be thought that I am speaking of blocks of skyscrapers on the American model. Personally, I would never agree to such construction for wage earners. I am thinking in general of blocks of an average of 3 or 4 stories, and in exceptional cases of 5 stories.

RE-DEVELOPMENT AREAS

I come to an essential part of the plan of this measure. I have said already that I believe it is impossible adequately to deal with the overcrowding evil without tackling it in the characteristic form in which we find it in the old central areas of towns—areas where expensive sites are wasted by bad development and bad construction—and that we shall be making a plan which will not succeed, unless we make special provision for dealing with such areas themselves.

What are the provisions we propose? They will be found in the Clauses which deal with the new Re-development Areas as they are defined. The intention there is that the housing authorities should come on to the scene and boldly take over into their own hands the central overcrowded, badly constructed, badly developed areas; and, having taken them over, should clear them to the extent that is necessary; that they should re-develop them as regards the lay-out so as to make the most economic use of the sites; and then reconstruct or rebuild so as to house the greatest possible number of wage earners on those sites under proper conditions.

I will give an instance of the kind of area which we must have in mind in contemplating this picture. It is one of those areas of old, middle class property which has come down to us. All those who

labor in this field know that one of the most difficult problems we have is the old, middle class property area which is now let off in dwellings of 4, 5 or 6 flats to a house to wage earning families, with the result that you have families to that number—whatever it may be—living in a house which has only got establishment equipment for one.

That is responsible for some of the darkest splashes on our housing conditions. In the wide sense there is only one way to deal with those properties in due time, and that is to sweep them away and reconstruct them as dwellings appropriate to wage earners where the full amenities of life are separated for each family.

RECONDITIONING OF INDIVIDUAL HOUSES

There is another aspect of this problem which has to be considered in this connection. When you are dealing with areas such as those for the provision of wage earners' houses, you find a certain kind of property which is not a slum. It is too good to be pulled down, but is not at present up to a proper standard but it can be made suitable by the treatment we summarised in the single word "re-conditioning"; that is, improving the structure and attending to such matters as damp courses, by putting in amenities such as water closets and bathrooms, and attending to drainage, light and air and all other works of that sort. There is a good deal of useful work of that kind to be done in the areas to which I refer, and we include that in the provisions of this Bill.

What are those provisions? Powers are given to housing authorities to take over slum houses in Re-development Areas and deal with them under the same provisions as in the 1930 Act, and to redevelop, pull down, reconstruct and recondition other houses wherever necessary.

The general provisions with regard to re-conditioning were most closely studied by a committee composed of Members of this House, of which the chairman was Lord Moyne and the provisions as regards re-conditioning are based upon the recommendations of that Committee. I would like to acknowledge the very great assistance which the extremely practical recommendations of that Committee in this respect has been to the Government. We have there a full list of powers for the housing authorities, of standards to work on, of surveys which give them the knowledge for taking over, re-developing and re-conditioning the areas on these lines.

I think the House will see at this point—more clearly perhaps than it has been shown before—why it is essential that these duties, this heavy burden of responsibility, should be placed upon the local housing

authorities and not upon some outside or special body created for the purpose.

REBUILDING RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS

It will be observed that what we are contemplating is nothing less than the reconstruction—to a large extent—of the bad old cores of the inner areas of our great towns. It is a task which will require for its successful treatment complete control over the destinies of the town in the matter of its services; complete control over the laying out of streets; the provision of sewers, light and power and all other services of the town; and it will require—above all—complete control of the function of the planning of the town.

It is a matter of the first consideration that these schemes should be carried out in close relation to proper schemes of planning of the town as a whole. These powers can be exercised only by the local authority which is actually responsible for all these matters; and, since finance is involved in the manner which I will shortly describe, they can only be discharged by the authority which is also responsible for the finances of the town and is responsible to the ratepayers for the rates and the charges upon the rates.

If such be the plan of campaign under which we advance towards the conquest of overcrowding, there is one most important particular in which the picture yet remains to be cleared up, and that is the provision by which it is proposed to enforce the new standard. A scheme such as we are confronting, in its magnitude and wide scope, cannot be expected to be effective unless supported by all the force of the law. One fact, of course, emerges in the very forefront—that if you are going to make it a legally punishable offense to overcrowd a house in excess of the standard, you must not make it an offense which it is impossible to evade; in other words, you cannot compel people to leave a house if there is nowhere else to go to. That is the first consideration we have to bear in mind.

OVERCROWDING MADE A CRIME

Let me describe the provisions which are proposed to deal with that situation. In the first place, it will be a punishable offense to overcrowd a house. That offense will be, first of all, that of the occupier of the house who is actually responsible for the persons living in the house. In the second line—and the second line only—it will also be an offense if the landlord does anything which he ought reasonably not do which conduces to overcrowding, or if he leaves undone that which he

reasonably ought to do which conduces to overcrowding. It is not, of course, made an offense on the part of the landlord if anything happens over which he has no control.

Now we have to deal with the position of those who are already living in overcrowded houses and have nowhere at present to go. It is proposed that we shall have an appointed day under the Bill; and after that appointed day any fresh overcrowding will be a punishable offense against the law. But any overcrowding which existed before the appointed day will be protected against prosecution—all existing occupants will be protected when the offense first comes into existence.

They will be protected unless and until the person who would otherwise have committed an offense is made an offer of alternative accommodation which is reasonable for his purpose. By “reasonable” is meant reasonable from the point of view of space and room to accommodate his family without overcrowding; reasonable from the point of view of situation, that is, not too far from where he wants to live; and reasonable from the point of view of rent. If he refuses that accommodation and continues to live in overcrowded conditions, he may lose his protection. There is also special protection for an occupant whose house becomes overcrowded owing to a child reaching the prescribed age.

I think the House will see what the effect of that provision is. We make sure that—without hardship to any existing occupants, with due safeguards to the existing interests—overcrowding shall be reduced; and that, once overcrowding has been reduced, there shall be no back-sliding in the direction of overcrowding again. Any provisions less stringent than those must, I am afraid, fail in their purpose.

SUBSIDIES FOR REHOUSING THE DE-CROWDED

I have dealt with the outline of the Bill. Let me pass to the important Clauses relating to finance. I would say a general word about the relation of subsidies to overcrowding. I think there can be no justification for proposing or supporting any permanent system under which this essential of life, the home, could not be obtained without the assistance of a state subsidy; that we should be entirely opposed to any measure which made such subsidisation of rents a permanent burden upon the national Exchequer or upon local rates. But the measures which we are now proposing are not of that character.

What we are dealing with is a legacy of bad conditions from the past. We are engaged in an energetic continuous effort to put these conditions right for the future, so that when they have been put right

we may resume an even economic keel. But we have to recognise that, if we are to overtake that legacy of the past, we cannot get on to the even economic keel unless we are prepared to assist by subsidies the effort that is to be undertaken by this generation. It is, in short, a non-recurrent effort to overtake the past which cannot be achieved without some assistance from the State.

We must also recognise that it is a feature of that effort that we have to rehouse the lowest paid classes of the wage earners and that we have to re-house them very largely upon the most expensive central sites. That is a condition of the problem. Certainly that task cannot be undertaken without the assistance of subsidies from the State.

There is another aspect of this general question of subsidies that has to be apprehended. Just as this is a non-recurrent effort and should not land us in any permanent subsidising of rates, so there is no intention whatever of returning to the system of general subsidies.

That system failed. We have had general subsidies since the War and we have built 2,500,000 houses, and yet we have slums and overcrowding as bad as ever.

It is only by the more scientific system of controlled subsidies directed to the immediate cure of the evil that we have managed to get under way with the cure of the slums. The present measure is an extension of that system; it is an extension of the system of controlled subsidies directed towards the end in view. It is our purpose not to hinder action but to make sure that in return for public money and effort we are actually getting the evil put right—that the money is actually used for re-housing the overcrowded.

In the past there has been a good deal of criticism—not wholly unjustified—to the effect that the houses produced by subsidy have not on the whole gone to the classes which most needed them. It is commonly said—and commonly true—that they have not gone to the lowest paid wage earners, who most need subsidised rents, but to the better paid wage earners.

That is, of course, completely contrary to the spirit and intention of this legislation, and the contrary effect we shall secure by the express provision that the preference for all subsidised houses shall be given to those who are living under slum conditions or overcrowded conditions or under bad housing conditions. Until those preferences have been satisfied by the housing authorities the houses built will not be considered to be freely at their disposal.

Those are the general conditions under which subsidies can be justified and are necessary. I refer now to the more particular provisions of the Bill.

SUBSIDIES NECESSARY ON HIGH PRICED LAND

We are imposing the duty on the housing authorities of providing the additional accommodation, and we must make sure that they have the means of fulfilling that duty. So we take as our general basis this rule, that subsidies shall be provided by the State wherever they are necessary to enable houses to be built at rents which are appropriate to the tenants for whom they are intended.

We have to consider two special cases. There are the flats on the more expensive sites. They cannot possibly be built at economic rents without a subsidy. We provide an automatic subsidy related to the cost of the site.

Again, in the case of the agricultural workers it is quite impossible to provide new houses on an economic basis at rents which they can pay, in view of the general level of agricultural wages. So, there again the subsidy is automatic in the case of houses for agricultural workers.

Then we come to the other and more general case of dwellings to be built on less expensive sites. What is the state of affairs there? At the present time there are many cases in which you can provide dwellings on an economic basis at rents appropriate to the tenants without the help of a subsidy. Where that is so it is impossible to justify a subsidy. In other cases it cannot be done owing to special conditions; that is to say, you cannot provide houses on the less expensive sites at the appropriate rent without imposing an undue burden on the rates.

In those cases subsidy is necessary in order to achieve the end of the Bill; and in those cases subsidy will be provided. The provisions in question merit the most careful attention. Putting on one side the automatic subsidies to flats and agricultural cottages, any housing authority is in a position to come to the Minister and say, "We cannot provide the small houses which we need for re-housing our overerowed population at the appropriate rents without the assistance of some subsidy. If they establish that case a subsidy is given. I do not think there is any question that that is the most reasonable and practical way of dealing with a situation in cases in which a subsidy is necessary.

Then take the other cases where it is not necessary. What are the circumstances which will be considered in deciding whether a subsidy shall be granted or not? The House will find them most carefully defined in Clause 29 of the Bill. One has to take into consideration the existing rate burden, any exceptional costs in the area in question which make the house more expensive, and the fact that there is a large percentage of large families to be provided for; or, finally, one has to consider that owing to the economic state of industry in an area,

rents lower than the normal rents with which we are generally concerned have to be charged to the tenant. Those are the conditions which may make the case for a subsidy a special case in connection with small houses.

SHARING THE COST

The distribution of the burden between the housing authority and the central authority is following the lines familiar to us in legislation. We divide the burden into three parts. Two parts are borne by the central authority and one part by the rates. The total contribution from public money to the new accommodation is this: Two-thirds comes from the Exchequer and one-third from the rates.

That is so in all cases, except in the case of agricultural cottages. In those cases you have to temper the wind. There the proposal is that the contribution from the housing authority shall be £1 per house and another £1 from the county council; and that a subsidy which begins at £2 and rises to a very generous maximum of £8, which will cover all possible cases, shall be provided by the State.

The House will see that I have left unfilled in this picture one of the most constructive and important aspects of this financial scheme. Subsidies are directed to the purpose of reducing rents to the appropriate level, that is rent levels appropriate to the tenants. Of course, the question arises, what is that proper level?

HOMES FOR 10 SHILLINGS

I will give the key to the whole finance of the Bill in a single phrase. Under the finance of the Bill the subsidies are designed on a basis of producing for the overcrowded tenant a house or dwelling—a flat or house—which will let at an inclusive rent of round about 10s. That is a rent inclusive of rates—or about 7s. without the rates. In rural areas the corresponding figures will be from 3s. to 5s., appropriate to the local conditions.

That figure of 10s. is a figure which has been commonly accepted as the goal towards which we ought to work by housing reformers of all shades of opinion. It is substantially lower than the goal as to rent which has been set up under other Bills which provided for subsidies in the past.

Let me make it clear that when I say round about 10s. I am not saying that that is a figure which has to be produced in every single case. I could not accept as a criticism of the financial provisions that there is this case or that case in which that level was not actually

attained. That is what will be attained in the normal case—taking the country as a whole, or even less.

I believe I can justify on the figures before me the proposition that the rents secured by these subsidies will in the normal case work out at something under 10s. But in such a city as London the rent will be more. As rents are normally higher and expenses greater, the normal in London will work out at something like a few pence over 11s. say 11s. 4d.; and that may also apply in the case of other cities where rents are high. That, I say, is a general standard taking the country as a whole and taking the subsidy upon the average.

THE SHRINKING FAMILY

The basis in the case of flats is the two bed-roomed flat which raises a most interesting question. Hon. Members by reference to that most interesting report of the Registrar General to which I have referred will learn another conspicuously interesting fact about housing conditions—which is not I think generally recognised—and that is how small is the average family with which we have to deal.

The average size of family in this country has now fallen to 3.7; and we have the most significant fact that, owing to the very big preponderance of families consisting of 3 and 2 persons, the average size of dwellings which we have to provide is substantially less than might be supposed on a mere superficial investigation.

Let me point out that the subsidy earned by the housing authority will be the same in respect of every dwelling which is provided whether it is large or small. It will be for the housing authority to say what size of dwellings it requires to accommodate those who are overcrowded or otherwise living under bad conditions. When it has established its case for a certain size of dwelling—whether 2-roomed, 3-roomed, 4-roomed, or 5-roomed—it draws the same subsidy for all the houses, great or small.

It is for the housing authority to say what dwellings of what size it requires. It then draws subsidy to the same amount for every building; and the amount of the subsidy is worked out for the country as a whole.

Let me now refer to the application of these provisions to agriculture. It would not be easy but it would be possible to work out a series of elaborate provisions for the special application of this Bill to agriculture, but the more closely one regarded its provisions the more one became convinced that that would be unnecessary—and indeed wrong—and that the right of way of dealing with the agricultural

position was boldly to bring the agricultural areas into the general scope of the measure; to say that the same principle should apply to every house in the country and then to make only those adaptations in respect of the agricultural cottage which were found necessary. Those adaptations are: First, the bigger subsidy to which I have referred, rendered necessary by the wider gap between wages and rents; and, Second, such adjustments as are necessary to meet the great variety of conditions in agricultural areas, as regards type of house, amount of rent and so forth.

It is proposed to deal with these by establishing a second Committee on lines which will be familiar to the House—on the lines of the Tudor Walters Committee—which will have the task of settling the appropriate subsidy required in each agricultural area in order to meet these varying conditions.

Wide elasticity in administration will be required to make this Bill as effective and as useful as it can be—as it ought to be, and as I hope it will be—in relation to agricultural conditions. Wide elasticity of administration is necessary in order to allow for essential differences between the conditions of life among the agricultural population and among the town population; and I think that hon. Members on examination will find that there is ample scope for such elasticity in the provisions of the Bill. * * *



I have now come to the end of my account of the provisions of the Bill. They are complex—because they are novel; they are closely interlocked; they are the result of long consultation; and they are designed for the single purpose of making this measure effective. The whole business of re-building will proceed rapidly. Let me make this clear that there is no reason why building under the Bill should not begin at once. Indeed, building houses to re-house the occupants of overcrowded houses can start from the very outset—as soon as this House makes this measure law.

WORK CAN BEGIN AT ONCE

From the time when the Bill is passed this process will begin and proceed with the utmost speed along what I believe to be the certain path of securing a remedy for the evils with which we are faced. The housing authorities, I am confident, will view the measure with that enthusiasm and efficiency which we are accustomed to expect from them

and which we are used to see from them in measures of social reform of this sort.

If there is any doubt in the minds of any with regard to profiteers and as to what the standard under the Bill is to be, I will say to them, "Argue the standard and see that it is a just one, but once you have agreed that the standard is a just one; you cannot justify anybody in extracting a profit from a lower standard than that which has been agreed upon as the proper standard of accommodation for our national purposes."

If anyone thinks that this Bill will impose an undue infringement on the general liberty of the subject, I will say again that the truest liberty can only be obtained by a self-denying ordinance which makes people voluntarily agree on certain measures of restriction which are necessary, in order that we may enjoy the maximum benefit to be obtained from living under proper housing conditions.

We have now before us a great task. We have exceptionally favorable circumstances for achieving a great aim.

I am confident that if the House adopts this measure, we can by continuous, courageous, persistent effort obtain by these means—and these means alone—a permanent raising of the standard of our civilisation.

(Housing - basis - Gt Bill)
THE CHIEF POINTS OF CRITICISM

The chief criticisms, both in and out of Parliament, of the Housing Bill relate to features of that measure other than those that deal with overcrowding. These are such matters as the basis of compensation to be paid for property acquired in slum clearance operations, the appointment of Housing Commissions to manage houses and similar questions. We are discussing these other features and these criticisms elsewhere in this issue.

The Housing Bill on the whole has had a remarkably good Press. There has really been very little fundamental criticism of the Overcrowding programme. A few questions have been raised with reference to it; some of these have been questions of principle, others, of detail.

The principal aspects of the measure concerning which questions have been raised may be summed up as follows:

The Providing of Alternative Accommodations; the Limitations of Redevelopment Areas; the Amount of the Subsidy to Flats and Cottages Built to Rehouse the Overcrowded Population; the Encouragement of Flats rather than Cottages; the Standards of Overcrowding—some have considered them too high—others too low; the Inclusion of the Living Room in the Number of Rooms that may be Occupied before Overcrowd-

ing Takes Place; the Application of the Scheme Solely to the Working Classes and not to Those Higher Up in the Social Scale; the Tendency Toward Concentration of Population in the Centers of Cities Instead of Encouraging Garden Cities and Decentralization; the Sizes of Rooms as being Too Small; the Failure to Include Cubic Space as a Basis in the Standard of Overcrowding; the Invasion of Homes and of the Liberty of the Subject by Inspection as to Occupancy.

None of these points of opposition is really serious. Many of them are based upon misunderstanding. Some of them are due to a too idealistic approach to the problem.

DECENTRALIZATION AND URBANIZATION

Among the latter may be cited the position of the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association as expressed in an editorial in their Journal by the Editor, W. L. Hare. The burden of his opposition and that of the distinguished architect and town planner, Mr. Barry Parker, is that the bill tends to encourage the keeping in the centers of great cities of a vast urban population instead of forcing that population and the industries in which they are employed out into the country. In other words, Mr. Hare objects to the measure because it is not a measure of decentralization of population or one for the stimulation and encouragement of Garden Cities—a movement to which he and his associates are very definitely committed.

While we sympathize strongly with these views and believe that everything that can be done to decentralize our urban populations and encourage the growth of Garden Cities is highly desirable, yet we cannot overlook the fact that the Government in this instance is dealing with a real, present and serious problem and must approach that problem realistically.

Knowing Mr. Hare and Barry Parker and their fine intelligence, we believe that, were they situated as the Minister of Health is situated and had responsibility for dealing with the problems that he is attempting to solve, they would adopt an exactly similar course.

While we may all heartily believe in getting people to move out of the cities into the country, yet we must all honestly admit that there are great masses of our city populations who prefer to live in cities and who would not move out to the country under any circumstances; that there are other very large portions of the population who wouldn't be advantaged by moving to the country, nor would the countryside be advantaged by having them there. The thing to do is to build as many Garden Cities as there is need for, to urge as many people as possible

to move out into the country who may want to do so, and at the same time make all of the conditions of city living what they should be.

FLATS OR COTTAGES—WHICH?

An objection closely allied to this is the objection that has been raised, both in and out of Parliament, that the bill encourages the development of living in multiple dwellings rather than in cottages. In England today, fortunately, there is a very strong preference on the part of the average Englishman for his own home and for living in a cottage—even when such cottages are drab and insanitary rows of one-story dwellings.

Again, the approach of the Government to this problem is a highly realistic and practical one. Experience has shown conclusively that it is quite out of the question to redevelop slum areas or run-down areas in the center of cities located on land that has a high value by rehousing in small cottages the population living on that land—except at rentals that are prohibitive for the people whom it is desirable to rehouse.

There is no question that the only way these people can be rehoused on the site or in the neighborhood is by rehousing them in multiple dwellings. Fortunately, land values are not yet such, even in London, that it is necessary to go up high in the air to make such housing possible at rentals people can pay.

NO SKYSCRAPERS

It is significant that, although there has been much talk of building up in the air, there is no thought in the minds of the Minister of Health or of his associates, or of any in the Government, of building skyscraper tenements.

What is proposed is to build on sites in the center of cities—depending upon the type of housing that already prevails in these locations—flats with light and air on all sides, not exceeding two rooms in depth and seldom exceeding 4 stories in height, most of them being 3 stories. It is expected that there may be a few instances where 5-story flats will be built, but these will be extremely few and probably limited to certain portions of such large centers of population as London, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham and the larger towns.

But, even there, the likelihood is that such buildings will be kept low. The habit of the people is fortunately for low dwellings. There seems to be little danger—so far as the dwellings of the poor are concerned—of repeating in England the evils that have become so serious in America.

THE ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST THE FLAT

A great deal of light was shed on this question by the discussion of the Bill in Parliament. The Earl of Winterton—a supporter of the measure and of the Government—in discussing the question of building flats in central areas to provide for the overcrowded population, put the arguments against the flat in very clear fashion. He said:

It is somewhat difficult to put the argument shortly; but, in the first place, there is unquestionably an objection by many English working men and their wives to live in a hugh block of flats—partly for reasons arising during the time of the old bad Tenant Acts, and partly for more delicate reasons. There are working class families who feel that their children will be contaminated by having to live in an immense building with long staircases where they may come into contact with undesirable people; and there are undoubtedly cases where people living in a small slummy cottage cling to that cottage because it has a back garden. It is their own possession—their own home—and they have the strongest objection to being moved into a hugh block of flats.

Moreover, a great many of the flats built in London by local authorities—there are some I think in Westminster—contain no proper provision for giving air and sunshine to the younger members of the family, to the babies. In a small cottage the mother can put the child out into the yard and leave it there; but, if she is on the third or fourth or fifth story of a block of flats, it is difficult to do that, unless there is a proper barricade.

On the other side of the picture were some of the considerations expressed by Sir Percy Harris who, after pointing out the serious evils of overcrowding and citing figures as to the congestion to be found in different cities in England, had the following to say on this subject:

Flats are a necessity; but a regrettable necessity. You have to build upwards in order to meet the needs of those who must live near their work, such as the carman or the fish porter, and the thousands of people who are necessary in a big city like London.

AGAINST FLATS

Another Member who expressed himself very strongly against this tendency to encourage flats was George Hicks, for many years the Executive of organized labor in the building trades, with an intimate knowledge of the building industry and of housing conditions. On this phase of the bill he had the following to say:

With regard to blocks of flats, I recognise that there are conditions where they will be necessary. I do not like them and I am sure that none of us like them. If you inquire of people who live in a block of flats, they will complain of the stairs. Mothers will complain of having to carry their babies and goods up the stairs; they will complain of lack

of space for drying clothes; and of the worry they have in keeping children quiet because of neighbors objecting to their playing; they will complain of the lack of privacy and of the noise.

These people will also complain of the tramp of feet up the stairs—along the balconies and overhead. People who live in tenements will also tell you that they complain of the gramophone next door and of the wireless. Living in a flat is not an undiluted blessing for people who like quiet.

People who live in flats can make the lives of their neighbors miserable by not taking their share in cleaning the landing or cleaning the steps.

This problem is not to be settled quite so easily as some hon. Members may suppose. It is not merely a case of building a number of flats and putting the people in them. There are the social preferences of the people to consider. I can tell the hon. Member for North Bristol that this flat building scheme will do *us** no harm. The people who live in flats will always vote for us, because they are so disgusted with their housing conditions.

Further, the building of flats will not do away with overcrowding. We shall only have more families crowded upon an acre of land. The pavements and the streets will be more crowded when they come out of their flats and the district will grow more congested.

I should be interested if the Minister of Health would give us the facts as to the cost of blocks of flats and tenements and cottages. I am sure the Ministry of Health are no more desirous of building tenement flats than we are, and are only doing it because it is a case of necessity. I hope the provision of flats will be limited as far as possible.

THE BEING NEAR THEIR WORK FALLACY

Then the idea has been put forward that these flats must be built because men want to live near their work. I should have thought they would have been very pleased to turn their back on the cranes and railways and gas works and tannery yards where they have been working all day.

Who wants to live near his work? We ought to be taking the men away from their work to places where they can get refreshment and rest. Take my own industry in which there are 1,250,000 operatives engaged in building and public works. None of them lives near their work and that is the largest industry in the country. They all have to go where their work is—it may be in this place today and another part of the town tomorrow. There is no idea with them of living near their work. Who wants to live near his work?

The people want facilities for moving about. For centuries the housing conditions of the wealth producers have been bad, and I should say we could make a bigger contribution to housing by giving encouragement to the decentralisation of industry. That would be far better than trying to build up into the air.

THE STANDARDS OF OVERCROWDING

Probably the most constructive criticisms made with regard to the measure—criticisms which are likely to be heeded by the Government

* *The Labor Party.*—Editor.

in perfecting the bill in Committee—were the objections made to the standards established as to what constitutes overcrowding. Some of the critics objected to these standards as too low; others as too high; while others raised points with regard to important details.

The chief objector to these standards as too low was Arthur Greenwood—former Minister of Health under the Labor Government and Leader of the Opposition in the Parliamentary debate on the measure. His chief point of objection was to the inclusion of the living room among the total number of rooms in an apartment which could be occupied by a given number of persons before overcrowding would be established. He was by no means alone in this objection.

On the question of whether living rooms should count in the total number of rooms permitted to be occupied for sleeping purposes in a dwelling, the Association of Municipal Corporations—the representative organization of the Local Authorities—made a very sensible suggestion. They approved the inclusion of the living room as one of the rooms permitted to be occupied for sleeping purposes, where the dwelling consists of more than 2 rooms; but where the dwelling is of 2 rooms or less they suggested that the living room should not count as one of the rooms that may be lawfully used for sleeping purposes so far as the number of persons who may occupy the dwelling unit is concerned.

One Member of Parliament, Sir J. Walker Smith, actively connected with housing during the Labor Government, took the position that it is undesirable to fix any standard of overcrowding—certainly undesirable to make a statutory standard. The only group voicing the opinion that the standards of overcrowding was too high was the Auctioneers' and Estate Agents' Institute of the United Kingdom. They pointed out that if the standards were left in the Bill as proposed, they would be so difficult of enforcement as to create so difficult a problem at the outset that it might delay rather than assist the easy attainment of the desired improvement.

CUBIC CONTENT AN ELEMENT

In the earlier discussions of this subject we commented on the objection raised in various quarters as to the failure to include height as a factor along with superficial floor area in the standards set for human occupancy.

We know of no country and no locality where cubic air space has not heretofore been the basis of all overcrowding by-laws and regulations. It is obvious that where there are attic and basement rooms and rooms of inadequate height this element is one that cannot safely be

omitted. It is to be hoped that the Government, before it concludes its work on this measure, will adopt the suggestions made and include this third element as part of the basis of what constitutes proper standards for overcrowding.

THE RE-DEVELOPMENT AREAS

There has been surprisingly little objection or criticism to the establishment of Redevelopment Areas. We predict that there will be much more criticism as this scheme gets going; for it is colossal in its ultimate consequences and will have a vital effect upon many and varied interests.

One objection to the Redevelopment Areas was raised by a Committee of the London County Council that has been giving consideration to the Measure. They consider some of the details of the plan too restrictive—so far as London is concerned—to facilitate the purposes in view, and urge that as few limitations as possible be imposed in the statute in defining such areas, in order that the reconstruction of large, old, congested and badly arranged parts of the County of London may be undertaken.

The Association of Municipal Corporations made a further suggestion with regard to these areas that, instead of limiting them to districts in which one-half of the houses were overcrowded, the scheme should apply where a third or more of the houses were thus situated. This suggestion, we understand, has been adopted by the Government in the Committee consideration of the Measure and will be embodied in the amended bill finally to be enacted.

Further questions as to the Redevelopment Areas were raised. One of these, interestingly enough, asked why these areas should be limited only to towns of 50,000 and why should it not apply to all towns in England.

As was to be expected, objections have been made that the amount of subsidy offered to the Local Authorities by the Central Government to encourage the providing of new accommodations to house those who move from overcrowded homes is too small.

LIFE IN ONE ROOM

Dr. James Burn Russell of Glasgow in his book, "Life in One Room", published over 40 years ago, paints the following graphic and poignant picture of what living under such conditions means.



But let us ask ourselves what life in one room can be, taken at its best. Return to those 126,000 men, women and children whose house is one apartment, and consider whether since the world began man or angel ever had such a task set before them as this—the creation of the elements of a home, or the conduct of family life within four bare walls.

You mistresses of houses, with bedrooms and parlors, dining-rooms and drawing-rooms, kitchens and washing-houses, pantries and sculleries, how could you put one room to the uses of all?

You mothers with your cooks and housemaids, your nurses and general servants, how would you in your own persons act all those parts in one room; where, too, you must eat and sleep and find your lying-in-room and make your sick-bed?

You fathers, with your billiard-rooms, your libraries and parlors, your dinner parties, your evening hours undisturbed by washing-days, your children brought to you when they can amuse you, and far removed when they become troublesome, how long would you continue to be that pattern husband which you are—in one room?

You children, with your nurseries and nurses, your toys and your picture books, your space to play in without being trodden upon, your children's parties and your daily airings, your prattle which does not disturb your sick mamma, your special table spread with a special meal, your seclusion from contact with the dead and the still worse familiarity with the living, where would you find your innocence, and how would you preserve the dew and freshness of your infancy—in one room?

You grown-up sons, with all the resources of your fathers for indoor amusement, with your cricket fields and football club and skating pond, with your own bedroom, with space which makes self restraint easy and decency natural, how could you wash and dress, sleep and eat, and spend your leisure hours in a house of—one room?

You grown-up daughters, with your bedrooms and your bathrooms, your piano and your drawing room, your little brothers and sisters to toy with when you have a mind to, and send out of the way when you

cannot be troubled, your every want supplied without sharing in menial household work, your society regulated, and no rude rabble of lodgers to sully the purity of your surroundings, how could you live and preserve "the white flower of a blameless life"—in one room?

You sick ones, in your hushed seclusion, how would you deport yourselves in the racket and thoughtless noise of your nursery, in the heat and smells of your kitchen, in the steam and disturbance of your washing-house, for you would find all these combined in a house of—one room?

Last of all when *you* die, *you* still have one room to yourself, where in decency you may be washed and dressed and laid out for burial. If that one room were your house, what a ghastly intrusion you would be. The bed on which you lie is wanted for the accommodation of the living. The table at which your children ought to sit must bear your coffin, and they must keep your unwelcome company.

Day and night you lie there until with difficulty those who carry you out thread their tortuous way along the dark lobby and down the narrow stair through a crowd of women and children. You are driven along the busy and unsympathetic streets, lumbering beneath the vehicle which conveys your scanty company to the distant and cheerless cemetery, where the acrid and deadly air of the city in which you lived will still blow over you and prevent even a blade of grass from growing upon your grave.

ENGLAND'S NEW HOUSING LAW

Proceeding steadily forward, the present British Government has elaborated a comprehensive Housing Bill which was introduced in Parliament early in January.

While this measure is primarily a measure to deal with the great evil of overcrowding, it is also a general Housing and Town Planning Act.

It probably makes greater advances in dealing with slum clearance and the replanning of cities and with the general housing question than any single measure heretofore enacted in England.

We have already described in detail the provisions of the new bill that deal with overcrowding.

The bill also deals with Slum Clearance and with housing generally. It concerns itself with important and radical changes in the basis of compensation to be paid where private property is taken in slum clearance schemes. It adds to the law provisions that will facili-

tate the reconditioning of individual dwellings. It seeks to make it possible for the public authorities to equalize rents among tenants of municipal houses by bringing about the pooling or consolidation of the various subsidies granted to Local Authorities by the Government under various statutes back to 1919.

It changes the basis of advances for loans for small dwellings and adjusts them to the present-day money market. It makes it possible for Local Authorities to turn over the management of municipal housing estates to private bodies—Housing Commissions—to be managed in accordance with modern lines, where the Local Authorities so desire. It provides for the encouragement of the work of Public Utility Societies and aids in the forming of a central Society of this kind to bring about better coordination of action. It establishes a Central Housing Advisory Committee to advise the Minister of Health in housing matters.

Finally, it writes into the laws of England a declaration, found there for the first time, to the effect that the Local Authorities in their housing schemes shall give preference to persons who are occupying insanitary or overcrowded houses, to those who have large families, and those who are living under unsatisfactory housing conditions.

This has been rightfully termed the tenants' "New Magna Charta."

REDRESSING AN ANCIENT GRIEVANCE

THE BASIS OF COMPENSATION

If the Government had done nothing else in the new Housing Bill than make belated amends to property owners throughout Britain—who have heretofore suffered rank injustice, when their property has been taken in slum clearance schemes—it would have justified this measure.

We have pointed out repeatedly in these columns the serious injustice which the existing law inflicts upon decent property owners who keep their houses in good condition but who, under existing law, when their property is taken in a slum clearance scheme, are paid nothing for their houses but merely the site value of the land.

The Ministry of Health in a statement made public early in January explaining the new bill had the following to say on this point:

COMPENSATION IN SLUM CLEARANCE

Intensive action under the slum clearance programme has sharply outlined some hardships that are inflicted upon property owners under the existing law. Unless the slur of griev-

ance to which these hardships have given rise is removed, it cannot be expected that the slum campaign will proceed smoothly—it is even possible that progress will be retarded.

The hardships experience has shown to exist are:

1. The possibility that under existing law dwelling houses and other buildings may be included in a clearance area not because they are unfit for human habitation but because they contribute by their arrangement to the unhealthy conditions of the area;
2. The “reduction factor” which operates to reduce the compensation that would otherwise be paid to the owner of property acquired by a local authority for rehousing purposes; and
3. The fact that all owners of property condemned as unfit for human habitation are treated alike, whether or not they have done their best to maintain their property in a decent condition.

Provisions have been included in the Bill that will prevent the inclusion of fit dwelling houses or other buildings in a clearance area; that will repeal the “reduction factor”; and will allow a sum to be paid to the landlord who has done his best for his property. This will consist of a sum equal to the amount by which the landlord’s expenditure on repairs, during the 5 years immediately preceding condemnation is in excess of $1\frac{1}{4}$ times the rateable value of the house—or a sum equal to $1\frac{1}{2}$ times the rateable value, whichever is the greater.

WHAT PRICE SLUM CLEARANCE?

In discussing these proposals in the House of Commons on the Second Reading of the bill, the Minister of Health, Sir Hilton Young, had the following to say:

As the slum clearance campaign has been developed; as the effort has been intensified; as we have multiplied, as I have said, by 30 times the rate at which we have been working; we have found that new strains have been thrown on the machinery, and we have found certain imperfections in the basis of compensation under the 1930 Act which undoubtedly stand in the way of the free operation of that Act.

We have before us here a task that is going to strain the energies of the whole country; and for its performance we need the good will of public opinion but we shall not have that good will for any effort of the sort unless we satisfy public opinion that we are doing no particular injury to any particular class of the community.

I am concerned to get this work done; and in order to get the work done, I propose that there should be no hesitation in remedying any inequity which we find and which may be contained in the machinery which we are administering.

I find in the first place that the following alterations in the basis of the 1930 Act are required to be made—that no house should be included in a clearance area and made subject to the site value basis of compensation which is in itself a good house and fit for occupation.

Let me explain to the House that under the present administration of that Act, that is not being done; we are not including such houses

on a site value basis of compensation. But it is said to me, "Tomorrow your successor may reverse the policy under the Act of 1930." True, that is possible. But I propose to put the temptation out of the way of myself and my successors.

On another matter I think there is also a change to be made in order to prevent injustice. The House knows that at the present time when a site is taken for re-housing, the arbitrator is directed to limit its value to its value for re-housing purposes.

That is practically confiscating a part of the true market value of the site. I have never been able to reconcile my mind to that principle; and I propose that we should clear the front of slum clearance by cancelling that provision.

Most important of all these provisions, there has been complaint of inequity as regards the working of the site value basis of compensation in several parts of the country; and indeed there has been a very clear expression of opinion; and there has also been prolonged inquiry on my part and on the part of my officers.

I find that these complaints are due at bottom to the reason that the 1930 Act and the site value basis of compensation for slum clearance make no difference between the good landlord who has done his best with a bad house and the bad landlord who has done nothing. There has been no difference as between the good fellow who has striven to keep his house up to standard and the extortioner, the heartless brute, who has squeezed every penny out of his tenants.

I do not think that can be justified; and I think we must introduce that consideration into the compensation payable. That is what is proposed. We propose to give an allowance by way of compensation to the good landlord in contradistinction to the bad.

THE OBJECTIONS TO THIS PROPOSAL

This proposal for a change in the basis of the compensation to be paid to private owners when their property is taken in slum clearance schemes has aroused considerable opposition, led by the powerful London County Council who have been joined in this opposition by other Local Authorities.

In a formal communication issued by that body the statement is made that "these proposals involving alterations in the basis of compensation for property required in connection with slum clearance operations are open to serious objection on the grounds of increased cost and the delay which would ensue in carrying out such operations."

The Association of Municipal Corporations—the central body representing the local authorities throughout England—in a formal report with reference to the bill, states that "they regard these provisions as open to grave objection and that in their opinion there should be no departure from the principle that the basis of compensation for premises which are either unfit for human habitation or are dangerous or injurious to health be the site value."

It is rather extraordinary that a body of public officials as experienced and informed as this group is, should have so misread the provisions of the bill which, according to the Minister of Health, make the change proposed only with regard to those buildings which are fit for human habitation but which happen to be located in such a way that it is necessary to include them in a slum clearance scheme in order to make a development that will prove satisfactory.

It is obviously most unfair to put the good owner and the bad owner on exactly the same basis, as is done under the present law.

Re-enforcing the point of view of the London County Council, Herbert Morrison, its Chairman—but speaking for the London Labor Party of which he is Secretary—in a letter to the Minister of Health repeated what had already been said and added:

The inevitable consequence of the proposals in the bill will be to increase the compensation payable by local authorities; and—what is equally serious—to slow down procedure in connection with the urgent problem of the slums. Indeed, experience shows that such slowing down has already taken place in anticipation of the compensation clauses becoming law. Although the Government is making legislative provision for additional compensation, it is leaving the whole of the increased financial burden to be borne by the local authorities; this appears to us to be highly inequitable.

The local authorities themselves will either be forced to increase the rent of the dwellings in which those formerly resident in slum areas are rehoused, or to place the charges consequent on the increased compensation on the rates. The effectiveness and magnitude of slum clearance operations may as a consequence in some areas be seriously impaired.

In debating this point in the Committee stage of the bill, the Earl of Winterton pointed out that the legislature when it enacted the present law with reference to the basis of compensation, had created the scandal of depriving people—who were in many cases owner-occupiers—of their property and what was in some cases their sole means of livelihood. He added that it was not sought to give market value for houses that were in themselves bad and unfit for human habitation, but for houses that were to be demolished solely because of the surrounding conditions. He went on to say that a Committee of the House of Commons ought not to be concerned with the views of any particular municipality, but ought to see that justice is done between the State, the local authorities, the private owner and everybody else.

Sir Hilton Young, summing up the reasons for the change proposed, stated that the justification for applying the principle of site value as the basis of compensation was that a house was unfit for habitation; but, if a house was fit for habitation the owner was entitled

to more than the site value. If a house was not unfit for habitation, it had, *ex hypothesi*, some value; and that value had to be assessed for compensation.

The essence of this issue was very well put by the *Builder* which commented editorially on this proposal as follows:

This amendment is an act of justice long overdue. If in the public interest it is necessary to devote land which has a commercial value to residential purposes, then, surely, the loss of value entailed by such appropriation should be borne not by the unoffending owner but by the public purse.

A FURTHER INJUSTICE

NO RIGHT OF APPEAL

There is under the present law a further injustice to property owners in carrying out slum clearance schemes—at least it would seem so to American eyes—in the fact that when the local authorities make an order for a slum clearance scheme and that order is confirmed by the Minister of Health, there is no appeal to the courts as to the findings of these administrative officials.

It may be that the property in question which the local authorities declare to be insanitary and unfit for human habitation is not so in fact, or that it can be made sanitary; but the English courts hold that this is a matter for the local authorities and the Minister of Health to decide and is not reviewable by the courts.

Several groups have called attention to this situation in connection with the discussion of the pending measure—among these the Auctioneers' and Estate Agents' Institute of the United Kingdom, who in a letter to the Minister of Health state:

We find a definite opinion of regret existing that the Minister is still left burdened with the duty of deciding the question of condemnation of property as uninhabitable. The view is generally expressed in influential quarters that either there should be a right of appeal to a court of law or to some *ad hoc* judicial authority, or alternatively, that the official Arbitrators should be charged with this duty when assessing the case of disputed compensation.

This point was discussed at considerable length during the Committee stage of the bill but was opposed by the Minister of Health on the ground that the question of whether a house was insanitary or not was an administrative matter and that the local authority had the necessary knowledge.

There was further discussion of this proposal at a later meeting of the Committee considering the bill when the right of appeal to the county court in clearance orders was urged on the ground that the

Act of 1930 gave such a right in the case of demolition orders dealing with single houses rather than whole areas.

Replying to this argument, Sir Hilton Young said:

The procedure of appeals to county courts in the case of demolition orders of single buildings was put in the Act of 1930—he thought wrongly—in order, as it was thought, to save time and expense. It was thought that it would be more convenient and economical to the individual house owner to go to the county court; but that had not turned out to be a good arrangement and property owners would be well advised to seek to amend it in their own interests.

The rights of the community had to be reconciled with the rights of the individual. The Bill raised the issue of the principles of social justice and the principles of private justice. The Government had shown the most careful desire not to sacrifice the interests of private justice, even to the larger interests of social justice because they believed the two to be reconcilable.

He had ascertained that the root cause of complaint against the Bill was the inequity of the basis of compensation—which had now been rectified. Complaints against the present procedure had been few and almost non-existent; and where he had traced them to their roots he had found that they were not justified. The inspectors of the Ministry of Health were scrupulously anxious to give justice and fair play to the private owner.

Nothing was further from the truth than to say there was a bias against the owner in the Ministry of Health. The present procedure did justice—and it was recognised to do justice by the parties themselves.

The issue of whether houses were fit for human habitation was not analogous to an issue that was interpreted in the law courts.

It could be decided only by the national conscience expressing itself through the House of Commons and coming to a head in the policy being administered by the Minister who was responsible to Parliament.

“HARD CASES MAKE BAD LAW”

There is a saying in the legal profession that “hard cases make bad law”. The origin of this provision as to the basis of compensation in slum clearance projects is an excellent illustration of the truth of that statement.

The origin of the present basis of compensation found in the English statute has always been a source of wonder to us.

In the discussion in the House of Commons on the Second Reading of the bill, an interesting bit of history was given to the House by Dr. Addison—Minister of Health in the Lloyd George Government and a Member of Parliament at the present time.

Protesting against the proposal contained in this bill to pay owners market value instead of site value for houses not in bad condition but unfortunately located, he had the following to say:

This is putting the acquisition of land principle back to 1883. It is reversing the whole of the improvements brought about in the Acquisition of Land Act of 1919, for which I was responsible, and which altered the basis of valuation.

This is the point of difference. Prior to the Act of 1919 when a valuation was ascertained with respect to property compulsorily to be acquired, the position was governed by a decision in a case which arose between the Manchester Corporation and the owner of some land on the side of Lake Thirlmere. A decision was given in court that the value should be not the value of the land to the seller, but the value which it would possess when the purchasers had used it for the purposes for which they proposed to use it. That case was in April, 1883.

The interesting and extraordinary fact brought out by Dr. Addison was that in this case which has come to serve as a precedent, a foreigner, one Countess Ossalinska owned some poor agricultural land which the Corporation of the City of Manchester desired to take in connection with a public improvement it was making for water supply.

This land it is stated was worth at a generous allowance some £10 an acre. The owner of the land, however, raised the point that it was worth much more than its agricultural value to the Corporation of the City of Manchester; that it was worth to them the value it would possess as a collecting ground for water.

The valuer or arbitrator in the case decided his award on this basis and compensation was paid to the owner in an amount scores of times the real value of the land. Apparently, this decision—a very bad one—served as a precedent for many years thereafter; for according to Dr. Addison it practically estopped for many years local authorities from acquiring land under clearance schemes.

The amazing thing is that those responsible for the Acquisition of Land Act of 1919 should have written into the law as a basis of future procedure a principle intended to benefit the owner of property but so applied as to work in reverse fashion.

We have always wondered how this extraordinary provision came to be in the English law. It is indeed time that it was removed from the statutes and a fair and equitable basis of compensation substituted for it.

OTHER CHANGES

Among the other provisions of the bill, there are a number of changes dealing with more or less technical aspects of the administration of the housing laws which do not have a very broad or general interest but have a very real interest for the local authorities, the Ministry of Health and the owners of property in England. These

deal with conditions under which reconditioning of individual property by private owners is encouraged, where such property can be wisely reconditioned and does not need to be destroyed.

RECONDITIONING

The Bill also encourages the fuller use of reconditioning existing houses in adding to the pool of accommodation, and enlists the efforts of the Housing Associations, Public Utility Societies and other voluntary bodies in this and other directions. It gives local authorities the power to acquire compulsorily as well as by agreement buildings suitable for reconditioning as working class dwellings. Compensation at market value will be given. The local authority can then either recondition them themselves, or arrange with a Housing Association to do so. Indeed, their power to enter into arrangements with Housing Associations covers not only this but the carrying out of work under a redevelopment plan and rehousing in connection with overcrowding or slum clearance generally. Any Exchequer subsidy available to the local authority can then be passed to the Association.

Local Authorities will be able to promote the formation of Housing Associations, to subscribe for share or loan capital in them, to make advances to them or guarantee the interest on money they borrow or capital they issue. The powers of the Public Works Loan Commissioners to make loans to such bodies are also extended, and the Minister is enabled to contribute to the expenses of a central body which may be set up for promoting their creation or extension.

MANAGEMENT OF HOUSING ESTATES

A proposal of great merit which seems to have had powerful political repercussions—arousing the wrath of the Labor Members of Parliament, as well as the Labor councils—is a proposal that is intended to remove the management of housing estates from political influence and manipulation, as well as to insure sound management of such property, which is so complicated and difficult a problem.

Discussing this aspect of the measure, Sir Hilton Young, in the Second Reading debate had the following to say:

When you have built new houses and abolished old slums, you must prevent the creation of new slums; and there is no measure more important for this purpose than to secure good management of the good new houses.

It is marvelous to see the results that can be obtained by raising the tenants' outlook on life—in making good their attack upon better

conditions of living or, to put it on a lower level, in maintaining the property of the owners.

It is marvelous to see what can be done to that end by the adoption of humane, well considered measures for welfare work and for what is so well known to us all as the Octavia Hill system of rent collection.

Good management is an essential condition of all ownership of such property and without it we shall not get the benefit of this measure.

We want to inaugurate the new year by introducing into our law a new possibility—the possibility that public housing estates of this sort shall be transferred to more permanent bodies as managers, who will be able to give them more continuous attention, by developing a more continuous policy in management, by closer attention and by more professional knowledge of the business of management than can often be given by the elected committee of a representative body. And so, we take powers for the housing authorities to appoint permanent bodies of management commissioners.

Let me make it clear that this is an optional power at present, and that it is a power which will preserve these management commissioners as servants of the public authorities.

PUBLIC UTILITY SOCIETIES

That the Government is fully conscious of the magnitude of the problem confronting it, and sees its many sidedness, is evidenced in no better way than by its plans to harness private benevolence to official action for housing reform.

One of the means of bringing about better results is to encourage and utilize the limited-dividend Societies which exist in England in large numbers—known as Public Utility Societies—which have done such notable work in the housing field, especially in taking over old estates and improving them along Octavia Hill lines.

In discussing this aspect of the measure on Second Reading, the Minister of Health had the following to say:

We have in this country great forces of housing effort and energy in the Voluntary Associations and Public Utility Societies which organise and bring to bear upon housing a great mass of experience and knowledge and also bring to it particular gifts. These are the gifts of intimate personal concern and of special knowledge of special areas; and it must ever be a point of policy in developing housing efforts to ensure that the very best use is made of those organisations.

We propose in the Bill to take every practicable measure to develop that voluntary effort to the utmost. We are proceeding on the basis of encouraging cooperation between the housing authorities and the Voluntary Associations and Public Utility Societies.

I should not agree with the proposition that it was possible to achieve anything in housing by bringing Public Utility Societies on to the scene as rivals to the regular housing authorities. But there is a future of increased effort and of growing utility for cooperation between those bodies and the housing authorities I am sure—if proper means are taken to secure it.

We propose to enlarge the opportunities of these Societies. We have as a matter of fact drafted in the Bill a kind of charter for these bodies defining their position in this matter. They are to be in a position in which by cooperation and agreement with the housing authorities they can take over any part of the work of the housing authorities which is designed for them under the law—re-housing for slum clearance, re-development, re-conditioning, provision of fresh accommodation and other forms of housing effort.

It is in connection with re-conditioning that some of the most useful and characteristic work of the Public Utility Societies has been done. But I would by no means limit their activity to that branch of effort. Their opportunities should be extended to all branches of housing effort.

It is proposed to take a particularly practical step in this connection by providing fresh facilities for them to obtain the working capital which they require for their work. Let me make it clear, however, that as regards subsidy they will stand where they have arranged to stand with the housing authorities.

As regards subsidy they will stand in exactly the same position as the housing authorities; and it will be open to the housing authority to make any contribution to them from the rates of which it approves. In addition to that, however, it is the provision of working capital which is of particular moment to them and we have taken measures in that respect. The Public Works Loans Board will now be authorised to advance up to 75% of the value of their property instead of the previous two-thirds.

In addition, by a provision which I think is well-designed for the purpose, we have found means of securing for them the possibility of borrowing up to 90%. If a local authority gives a guarantee in respect of a loan, such a guarantee will enable the Public Works Loans Commissioners to increase the loan up to 90%—which I think is the maximum that should be provided from public funds, so as to retain some interest on the part of the Society in good management.

In that connection, I look to an active campaign for the promotion of these Societies. We welcome the formation of a new central body* to represent these Societies; and I have taken power in the Bill to give the most practical form of encouragement to the new central body to look after the Housing Associations by making a contribution to their expenses during the anxious period of the first five years.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

One of the proposals in this measure looks toward the establishment of a Central Housing Advisory Committee to assist in the establishment of the Management Commissioners which the Act proposes to make possible. In addition, the functions of the Committee are to act as general advisers on all phases of housing to the Minister of Health.

In explaining the bill in Parliament, Sir Hilton Young said that there was one matter in particular which he looked to for assistance

* Recently, steps have been taken by 200 Societies along these lines and the National Federation of Housing Societies will soon be in being.—Editor.

from this new Advisory Committee when set up; and that was, in connection with building materials and standardization of parts and lowering of the cost of building. On this point he had the following to say:

The brightest hopes in the future of reducing costs and accelerating building lie in the direction of the better organisation of the providing of building materials. There is much to be done in such technical matters as standardisation and simplification of parts of buildings, and in grouping of orders so as to obtain the best prices for mass orders instead of worse prices for smaller ones.

This is an effort that is to be continuously applied, in order to counter any tendency towards a rise in prices as this housing effort steadily increases. And in this effort I look to the greatest assistance from this new Central Housing Advisory Committee—on which I propose that there should be a strong element of men of business experience who can bring in that particular region of knowledge which we need for developing our measures in that regard.

THE CONSOLIDATION OF SUBSIDIES

One other feature of the new bill that has not been referred to, deals with the consolidation of the various subsidies granted under different Housing Acts since 1919. Though technical, it is of great importance both to tenants and to the local authorities.

Explaining the need for the proposed change in the law, Sir Hilton Young made the following statement to his fellow Members in the House of Commons:

There is one other aspect of the finance of the Bill to which I would make brief reference. It is a somewhat technical matter, but is of the highest significance. There has been some wastage of housing energy and housing finance in the past, owing to the fact that under the long series of housing measures passed by Parliament each state subsidy has been segregated for the work of one particular measure, so that we have had the 1919 subsidy applicable only to 1919 houses; the 1923 subsidy applicable only to 1923 houses; and so on. The subsidy in each of these measures has been applicable only to the houses constructed under that measure, and the result has been a great wastage of effort and of efficiency; and also the abuse which is so familiar to Members of the House of differential rents.

Different rents have had to be charged for houses which were exactly similar but on different sides of the street—simply, because they had been built under different conditions. It has been my ambition ever since I came into contact with these problems to get rid of this hindrance in the way of good government. And it is proposed to do so under this Bill by pooling all the subsidies on the one side and pooling all the houses on the other; so that, the whole resources of state subsidies and local rate subsidies can be used at discretion by the housing authorities and applied to the whole pool of houses provided—subject only to certain general restrictions, the most important of which I have already mentioned, namely the restriction as to a preference in favor of slum dwellers or others living under bad housing conditions.

There is one other most important matter in this connection to which reference must be made. The subsidies under the 1930 Act are admittedly very large. Indeed, I believe that some housing authorities have found them embarrassingly large. In order that there may be the greater possible head of energy, of courage and of confidence for the slum clearance campaign, there has been no question of making a reduction in the subsidy. Hitherto, housing authorities have felt some lack of confidence owing to the fact that at the periodical revision that subsidy might be reduced.

In order to remove such a fear from their minds, it is proposed to stabilise that slum clearance subsidy for the five-year campaign, and to give complete confidence to the local authorities by the assurance that they will have full measure of support from the 1930 Act during the course of the campaign. Owing to the new pooling arrangement there will be surpluses in the case of some authorities—which they will find a help in undertaking their new duties of dealing with overcrowding under this measure.

This important change in financial arrangements should prove of great advantage to the local authorities throughout England, should bring about an equalization of rents and will be welcomed by tenants as well as by local officials.

The Second Reading of the Measure was had on January 31 when the bill was ordered to that stage of progress by the large vote of 291 to 46. The Committee stage of the bill has progressed rapidly and on April 12th, 58 Clauses of the measure had been discussed and agreed to. It is expected that the Measure will receive the Royal Assent before Parliament rises in July.

Thus will be put upon the statute books another great enactment in the series of Housing Laws adopted by the English People.



After reading the two days' Parliamentary Debate on this measure, and having heard the arguments—political and otherwise—of those opposed to it, we are inclined to the view that His Majesty's Ministers must feel that "uneasy lies the head that *serves* the Crown".

TWO ASPECTS OF ENGLAND

To our readers who are planning to go to England for the International Housing and Town Planning Congress at London in July, we commend two books to be taken for reading on the voyage over and for reference afterward.

One is "The Cathedrals of England"*, with a deeply felt Foreword by Hugh Walpole and 133 photographic pages. This will give

* "The Cathedrals of England", by Harry Batsford and Charles Fry; with a Foreword by Hugh Walpole. Illustrated. London, Batsford. 7s. 6d. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 597 Fifth Avenue. Price \$2.75. 114 pp.

reminiscent delight to those who are already familiar with the peculiar dignity, power and charm of these glories of England, and it cannot fail to create and stimulate in others a desire for this new experience—quite outside and beyond the cold curiosity aroused by the ordinary guide book.

The other book is called "The Old Inns of England"*. This also is fully illustrated. It is delightfully written with historical notes of great interest, amusing anecdotes and a fascinating chapter on "Inn Names and their Lore" for which the reader will be grateful afterward as he tours rural England.

A. V.

AMSTERDAM CONSIDERS SKYSCRAPERS

Five years ago the municipality of Amsterdam, Holland, appointed a Committee to consider the Height of Buildings in that city. The members of that Committee were the managers and chief officials of the technical and social municipal services of Amsterdam, the chief inspector and inspector of the State Board of Public Health, representatives of private Housing Societies, representatives of Dutch architectural Societies, trade unions in the building trade and a housewife.

The Committee was asked to report upon the following questions:

1. Is it possible to erect skyscraper tenements that will be hygienic and comfortable dwellings at a rent that can be paid by working class families?
2. What type of construction and what kind of accommodations should be used for high buildings in Amsterdam?
3. Is it necessary to establish a High Building District or Zone?
4. What effect have high buildings on the cost of land?
5. Do Dutch laws permit the erection of skyscraper tenements?

The Committee, for each of these five questions, appointed a sub-committee. On each of these sub-committees was appointed a reporter-specialist who was asked to report on the specific question referred to the sub-committee. His report was later discussed, altered and completed by the general committee and included in its final Report.

What led to the appointment of the Committee was the claim made by certain groups that it was possible to build workmen's dwellings in skyscrapers with better accommodations and at lower rents than were to be found in dwellings of low height; that such dwellings in tall buildings would have the advantages of more sunshine, more light and

* "The Old Inns of England", by A. E. Richardson. Illustrated. London, Batsford. 7s. 6d. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 597 Fifth Avenue. Price \$2.75. 114 pp.

more fresh air; and that there would be more space for public gardens, playgrounds and grounds for recreation.

Neither in Holland nor elsewhere in Europe, as a rule, are workmen's dwellings to be found higher than four stories, except in the Garden City of Floreal, near Brussels. These, however, are dwellings for the middle classes rather than for workingmen.

The Committee reported that for high buildings elevators were essential but that such form of construction was prohibitive in dwellings for working people, pointing out that projects elsewhere in that direction had failed because of the great expense of the construction of elevators and the cost of their maintenance and service by attendants night and day.

The Committee found that building up in the air in Holland costs more than for lower construction. In addition to the extra cost for elevators they report there are additional costs for staircases, for fire escapes, for water supply, etc. In the case of water supply they point out that normal pressure will not send running water up 10 stories or more, and that it must be pumped up.

In general, they found that the cost of construction would be higher in high buildings because higher wages have to be paid, due to the extra hazard to the workers; that, furthermore, it costs more to supervise this class of labor. Additional costs are to be found also in transporting the building materials necessary for such work. Finally, foundation work is always expensive in Holland, because of the nature of the land and the water conditions that have to be overcome. For skyscrapers this would be very costly.

Among the disadvantages of housing working people in high buildings, the Committee considered the principal ones to be: the concentration of a lot of families in one building; their dependence on elevators, which, they point out, must be considered as a drawback, especially for families with children; the losing of direct contact with those supplying food, etc. to the tenants; and the mingling of families who do not desire contact but who are bound to meet on account of the elevators.

With regard to the administration of such dwellings the Committee reported that there are many unknown factors, and that there is practically nowhere any experience to guide them, certainly in Europe; adding that successful administration of dwellings of this kind is only possible by persons well supplied with capital, or by a municipality or by Public Utility Societies.

Such buildings, not being built to sell, it will be difficult to obtain the capital required for their erection. In addition the running of tall

buildings is more difficult and more expensive than the administration of the usual low buildings, because of additional services that would have to be supplied by the management, such as porter service, elevator service, central heating, care of bicycles, etc.

The Committee was of the opinion that for workmen's dwellings mechanical ventilation, disposal of household refuse and waste, telephone service, vacuum cleaning installation, etc. are too expensive.

The Committee states that the cost of construction of high buildings will exceed the cost of construction of normal 4-story tenements by 30% and more, pointing out that the cost of construction of a skyscraper built at Amsterdam 2 years ago exceeded the cost of normal construction by 50%. They add that rents in these buildings will necessarily be higher.

The Committee adds that as a general rule the same density of population would have to be maintained for high buildings as for buildings of the usual height and that special steps would have to be taken to prevent land values from rising as land values are always determined by the return that can be had for its use—the more intensively the ground is built upon, the higher its value.

From the point of view of town planning, the Committee were of the view that it would be very difficult—perhaps impossible—to plan in a satisfactory way a quarter or district of a town to be developed only with skyscrapers. Large open spaces are required between such buildings and it is evident that such a district could not be developed on a comprehensive plan, and, if repeated, would become monotonous.

The Committee asks where in such a district could there be placed the necessary shops, garages, factories, schools, churches, etc? Putting them between skyscrapers in low buildings would be quite unsatisfactory they hold and must be avoided. High buildings if built in rows instead of as towers, furthermore, would have the disadvantage of less sunshine in the dwellings and less unobstructed view from the dwellings, with the advantage however of being sheltered from wind, rain and cold.

The Committee finally concludes that while it is possible, from a technical point of view, to build skyscraper tenements, it must be strongly advised against, because such dwellings cannot be low-price dwellings but must be exclusively dwellings to be rented at prices beyond the reach of the workingman.

ARIE KEPPLER,
Director of Housing,
Amsterdam, Holland.

FEAR THE GREEKS EVEN THOUGH BEARING GIFTS

A striking example of the dangers inherent in the granting of housing subsidies and in people thinking that they can get something for nothing, is found in the experience of Greece, where some months ago the Government provided funds for the building of houses to be occupied by refugees. In Athens and on the Piraeus, the Greek Refugee Settlement Commission provided some 11,550 habitations.

In theory an excellent arrangement was made by which the tenants agreed to pay for their homes on the installment plan through a 15-year period. At least that was the theory, but in practice it failed to work. With the lure of accommodations provided by the Government at low rent there was a rush of families from the outside who took up all of the available accommodations and overcrowded them seriously. In some of these new well-built houses overlooking spacious streets there have been found more than one family in the majority of the rooms.

There has also been an organized resistance to paying any rent at all. The tenants have put forward very flimsy excuses—their poverty, their dissatisfaction with the accommodations and other reasons.

At the same time, the Government has found it difficult to insist upon payment as every family contains at least one voter, and the politicians are always thinking of the next Election.

Another strange result of this effort by the State to provide homes has been the policy adopted by many families of remaining content in homes totally unfit for occupancy in the belief that all they have to do is to sit tight and in time they will either be provided with a free home by the Government or a home at far less than the market rent.

From all of which it appears that human nature is very much the same at all times and in all places.

IN PARAGUAY

An unspectacular but rather persistent campaign is being carried on by the Government of Paraguay through the Bureau of Lands and Colonies to improve the living conditions of the working classes, particularly in the rural sections of that country. Some months ago a number of house plans for inexpensive rural cottages were printed for distribution by the Bureau in the hope that by this means the farmers would be encouraged to construct better homes. These plans were distributed free to anyone applying to the office of the Bureau.

As a result of this campaign a number of moderately priced houses for the families of laborers have recently been completed and opened for inspection in Asuncion. In El Salvador a similar project has been developed and a group of 50 houses constructed. All of these are being built very much on the same plan which, while providing modern comforts and conveniences, is sufficiently low cost to bring it within the means of the people whom the movement is intended to benefit. The financing of this project was met, not by the Government, but by several wealthy persons of the city.

In Managua where there was an earthquake in April, 1931, the President of Nicaragua issued a decree setting aside an area of approximately 30 hectares (one hectare equals 2.47 acres) out of the public lands to be divided among working class families. The land was divided into plots of 900 square meters (square meter equals 10.26 square feet) and each plot was given as a free grant to heads of families rendered homeless by the earthquake on condition that they should erect a house on this land according to specified regulations within a two-year period, and with the further condition that the land thus given may be neither leased nor sold.

IN PERU

About a year ago a number of houses situated on the outskirts of the city of Lima were completed and made available for the laborers who will occupy them. These houses are modern in every detail; their construction was financed by money from funds for the relief of the unemployed, and the houses were built under the auspices of the National Council of Government.

A PLANNED EXISTENCE

THE NATIONAL RESOURCES BOARD

With the dominant philosophy of the New Deal placing emphasis on the importance of planning in industry, it would have been strange indeed if the Administration should have overlooked the opportunity that existed to utilize the unemployed city planners of the country to prepare physical plans for the development of the nation with especial reference to the vast public works being undertaken with the expenditure of public funds.

A National Planning Board was appointed a year ago last July as an advisory board within the Public Works Administration and an allotment of a quarter of a million dollars was made to it for its work. That Board was headed by Frederic A. Delano with Charles

W. Eliot, 2nd, as its Executive, its primary purpose being to stimulate the preparation of state, regional and local plans.

Its programme as announced in the early days of its work, contemplated the sending of qualified technical advisers to such existing state, city and regional planning units as met with the requirements of the standards set up by the Board.

These advisers were to emphasize the need of practical planning and endeavor to co-ordinate any efforts that might be made in this direction by any community. Their work was to be chiefly of an educational character.

Where new planning units had been established, it was contemplated that one or more technical experts would be assigned by the National Planning Board to organize and direct the local or state work, when in the opinion of that Board and the Public Works Administration such a movement had assurance of reasonable local support.

In making this announcement, the National Planning Board expressed the view that there was need at that time for the preparation of practical plans in every state and in many localities within those states, and that it was expected when such plans were prepared they would be co-ordinated by the National Planning Board at Washington.

PLANNING BY THE STATES

Among the conditions laid down by the National Planning Board in order that state planning agencies might obtain expert assistance from the Federal Administration, were the following.

1. Appointment by the Governor of an unpaid State Planning Board, including perhaps four department heads, such as public works, highways, conservation and health, together with three citizens.
2. Assurance by the Governor that if this State Planning Board gets under way he will sponsor legislation to put it on a continuing basis.
3. The assignment from existing state offices, or by application to the Civil Works Administration, of drafting and stenographic help to carry on the work of the proposed board.
4. Development of a planning programme giving the status of planning work already done and outlining specific studies to be undertaken in the next 6 months. It was hoped that this programme would include a Land Use study, a 10-year Programme of Public Works, and perhaps a study for the Integration of the Transportation System within the state.
5. Any suggestions the Governor or the new board might wish to make as to a qualified planner to direct the work.

6. A statement of the Governor's willingness to appoint the planner or the chairman of the State Planning Board as the state representative on a regional or inter-state planning committee, if such committee were organized.

In a letter of advice to local boards, the National Planning Board suggested that the first aim of a state planning board should be the preparation of a Preliminary Plan which might well include:

(1) a Programme of Public Works for a considerable period, (2) a proposed Transportation System, (3) a general Classification of the Area of the state into the principal recommended Land Uses, and (4) Other Studies and Projects such as housing, government reorganization, etc., as may be indicated in each state.

A REGIONAL GROUPING

Last March, the National Planning Board announced that with a view towards the coordination of interstate and regional planning proposals in a carefully considered long range programme, the country had been divided into 12 Planning Regions, grouping the various states from the standpoint of primary drainage, land use and transportation interests.

At the same time the appointment of eight persons as Chairmen for eight of these districts was made public.

Their duties were to stimulate interest in city, state and regional planning and to assist the National Planning Board in coordinating state planning and to act as liaison officers between the National Planning Board and the state planning units—both official and voluntary.

A NATIONAL RESOURCES BOARD

After a year of effort, the Board was succeeded by the National Resources Board appointed by Executive Order on June 30th, last. The new Board consists of the Secretary of the Interior as Chairman, and, associated with him, the Secretary of War, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary of Labor, the Administrator of Emergency Relief and three others appointed by the President—Frederick A. Delano, Charles E. Merriam and Wesley A. Mitchell—the latter three being also named by the President as the Advisory Committee of the Board.

THE BOARD'S FUNCTIONS

What the English would call the "terms of reference" of the Board were stated as follows at the time the Board was appointed:

A. The functions of the Board shall be to prepare and present to the President a programme and plan of procedure dealing with the physical, social, governmental and economic aspects of public policies for the development and use of land, water and other national resources, and such related subjects as may from time to time be referred to it by the President.

B. The Board shall submit a report on land and water use on or before December 1, 1934. The programme and plan shall include the coordination of projects of Federal, State and local governments and the proper division of responsibility and the fair division of cost among the several governmental authorities.

The National Resources Board succeeded not only the National Planning Board but also the President's Committee on National Land Problems. The staff and functions of the Planning Board were transferred to the new Board by the Executive Order. A central office staff has been organized using the former staff of the National Planning Board as a nucleus.

The National Resources Board is continuing to give to qualified State Planning Boards the assistance previously provided by the National Planning Board through assignment of technical consultants. There are now over 41 State Planning Boards and 43 state consultants and associate consultants on the rolls of the Board serving with these agencies. Regional organization for interstate cooperation has been set up with District Chairmen appointed in 7 districts to date.

SIX MAIN DIVISIONS

The new work of the Board has been organized through 6 sections of a Technical Committee as follows:

1. LAND: The Land Planning Committee of the former National Planning Board has been set up as the Land Section of the Technical Committee of the new Board and has taken over work on a land report previously started by Dr. L. C. Gray in the Agricultural Adjustment Administration with a Washington staff functioning under the general supervision of Dr. Gray as Director of the Section.

A field staff has also been established through appointment of 48 land planning consultants working with the State Planning Boards. Regional land consultants have been appointed to work in relation with the District Chairman and the A. A. A. Regional Directors and to coordinate the work of the state land planning consultants.

Cooperative agreements have been arranged with Federal Bureaus to make available the information in their records through the loan of their personnel and through temporary assignment of employees of the Board to their work.

A working outline for this section of the report has been approved by the Board and the preliminary draft is now in the hands of the members for their consideration before transmittal to the President.

2. **WATER:** The Mississippi Valley Committee of the Public Works Administration has been transferred to the Board and reorganized as the Water Section of its Technical Committee. Morris L. Cooke, Chairman for the Section, has recently submitted a report on the Mississippi Basin, which represents the work of the Mississippi Valley Committee during the past six months.

The central staff of the Section has been expanded and a temporary field organization of regional water consultants and assistants has been established to make possible these early reports.

3. **MINERALS:** The Planning Committee for Mineral Policy, appointed by the President last April, is set up as the Mineral Section of the Board under the leadership of Dr. C. K. Leith.

4. **POWER:** The National Power Policy Committee established by the President is assisting the Board on the Power aspects of its work.

5. **TRANSPORTATION:** An additional section has been proposed in the field of transportation but not yet organized.

6. **INDUSTRIAL:** A further section has been proposed in the field of industry but this, too, has not yet been organized.

Other sections may be added later as need for research or coordination may indicate.

The requirement in the Executive Order of a report before December 1st on Land and Water Resources has necessitated primary attention to these subjects in the original organization of the work. As the work of other sections of the Technical Committee is gotten under way it is expected that there will be a corresponding increase of activity for that work.

The Board's work is financed from a special fund of \$100,000 from the Public Works Administration in addition to unexpended balances transferred from the National Planning Board.

In discussing the work of the National Planning Board of which he is the executive, Charles W. Eliot, 2nd, at a meeting of the landscape architects of the country held in Washington in January, 1934, had the following to say:

Each state is a problem unto itself and we have encouraged the new boards to undertake a great variety of projects that may be appropriate to state planning in their states—such as recreation problems, treatment of the roadside, control of scenery from the roads, and questions of historic and scenic sites. * * *

THE SKELETON AT THE FEAST

It seems to be more and more evident that some things belong in the Federal sphere, some things can best be handled in the Region, and some things in the city; and that a great design cannot be made from a combination of state plans and city plans. The National Plan

must be designed as a whole to provide a skeleton at the largest scale to be gradually filled in with details supplied by the states and local planning agencies. It must be more than a composite of details.

The National Planning Board made progress in thinking out some of these problems on a nation-wide scale, in defining objectives, and in getting some idea of the master skeleton of this national scheme.

The best lines of procedure are not altogether clear; but it is certain that the "great design" must be flexible, changeable, and thought of, not as something imposed from above but as a national growth to meet the need for coordination of individual and group effort toward a better life.

A REMARKABLE REPORT

Under date of December 1st, last, the Board submitted to the President a Report of 455 pages which is one of the most remarkable documents thus far published in the field of planning—certainly, in the United States.

In transmitting this Report to the President, the Board characterized it as "the first attempt in our national history to make an inventory of our national assets and of the problems related thereto. Moreover, for the first time it draws together the foresight of the various planning agencies of the Federal Government and suggests a method for future cooperation."

The Report is indeed a comprehensive one and is divided into 5 Parts. Part I contains the Report of the Board, their Findings and Recommendations, with 5 sections on the following aspects of the problems with which the Board is dealing:

Planning Our National Resources; Public Works Planning; State Regional Planning; Basic Data for Planning; and A Plan for Planning.

Part II deals with Land; Part III with Water; Part IV with Minerals; and Part V contains the Report of the Board of Surveys and Maps and deals with a National Mapping Plan.

The Foreword which accompanies the Report epitomizes the problems with which the Board is seeking to deal and the methods employed to solve those problems. With regard to the problems which confronted it and the methods that have been employed in studying those problems, and pointing the way for the future work of the Board, the following taken from that Foreword has special significance:

The natural resources of America are the heritage of the whole Nation and should be conserved and utilized for the benefit of all of our people. Our national democracy is built upon the principle that the gains of our civilization are essentially mass gains and should be administered for the benefit of the many rather than the few; our priceless resources of soil, water, minerals are for the service of the American

people, for the promotion of the welfare and well-being of all citizens. The present study of our natural resources is carried through in this spirit and with a desire to make this principle a living fact in America.

Unfortunately this principle has not always been followed even when declared; on the contrary, there has been tragic waste and loss of resources and human labor, and widespread spoliation and misuse of the natural wealth of the many by the few.

The conservation movement begun a quarter of a century ago marked the beginning of an organized national effort to protect and develop these assets; and this national policy was aided in many instances by the individual States. To some extent the shameful waste of timber, oil, soil, and minerals has been halted, although with terrible exceptions where ignorance, inattention or greed has devastated our heritage almost beyond belief.

This report of the President's National Resources Board brings together for the first time in our history exhaustive studies by highly competent inquirers of land use, water use, minerals, and related public works in their relation to each other and to national planning. The report lays the basis of a comprehensive long-range national policy for the conservation and development of our fabulous natural resources. If the recommendations contained herein are put into effect, it is believed that they will end the untold waste of our national domain now, and will measurably enrich and enlarge these national treasures as time goes on.

An examination of the reports upon land, water, minerals and public works, respectively, shows the importance of considering these special factors in their relations to one another and to economic and governmental problems as well. Water policies and land policies cannot be planned except as taken together, and evidently minerals cannot be considered apart from land in a planning programme. Erosion is a problem of land and water; afforestation is likewise a problem of land and water; flood control is related to navigation and also to land cultivation systems. Water pollution is closely related to industrial development, as well as to sanitation, urban and rural. Reclamation policies are inseparable from the agricultural policy of the Nation, while the recreation policies discussed in relation to land and water are appropriate to any comprehensive plan for social welfare.

It is the special purpose of the National Resources Board to bring together these and other social interests, sets of data and principles of action and to consider them from the over-all position of national policy. In so doing we should guard against too narrow a view of the possibilities of natural resources development, attractive as they are. The economic crisis in the United States was not caused by erosion, serious as its inroads are on our soil assets; nor is unemployment due chiefly to lack of adequate flood control, calamitous as the consequences of floods are in many instances. It is too much to suppose that the proper development of our drainage basins will of itself solve the problems of the perplexed body politic.

The problems centering around land and water cannot be solved in these terms alone, but require for their practical and successful treatment a full consideration of the broader but closely related aspects of agriculture, industry, labor, transportation and communication, health, education, public finance, governmental organization.

Finally, human resources and human values are more significant than the land, water and minerals on which men are dependent. The

application of engineering and technological knowledge to the reorganization of the natural resources of the Nation is not an end in itself, but is to be conceived as a means of progressively decreasing the burdens imposed upon labor, raising the standard of living, and enhancing the well-being of the masses of the people. It follows that the social directives back of such technical programmes should be developed by persons competent by training and point of view to appraise the human values involved.

The Report is so tremendous in its scope and in the problems that it is attempting to handle that it will not have the effect it should have, unless the important facts, information and principles contained in it are translated for the people of the country in some simpler fashion.

We commend to the National Resources Board that suggestion, as their next task.

Mr. Delano, the active Vice-Chairman of the Board, from his experience in developing the City Plan of Chicago as well as the Regional Plan of New York, must fully appreciate the value of interpreting in language that the "man in the street" will understand the important principles and considerations involved in this great study.

We hope that he will find someone in the Administration who can "Brisbane" this document for the American people.

THE OUTLOOK FOR HOUSING IN PHILADELPHIA

There are certain studies made annually by the Philadelphia Housing Association which when correlated with other studies present a record of housing conditions and needs in that city that challenge careful consideration. In this day of uncertainty when so many persons are unwilling to face the facts, when the theorists are in the saddle and misinformation is offered in the guise of truth, great harm may come to a city through indifference or antagonism to housing needs.

We have always had with us those who shape policies on casual impressions and those whose policies are formed solely to make immediate profit. It is an old experience in housing work to have sound policies, based on a careful assembling and analysis of facts and pointed to meet human needs, disregarded or discredited by men who fail to see that human need wisely met, in distinction from immediate personal gain, is the soundest basis of business prosperity.

I make these assertions fully realizing that they will not change those whose present policies are blocking dwelling construction, who are not themselves so blind to their own best interests that they cannot see that their own good lies through the impetus to recovery which is

inherent in construction programmes. And yet I am optimistic enough to hope that constant reiteration of this fundamental thought may undermine irrational hostility and lead to saner programming of dwelling construction in Philadelphia.

Some of the facts which these surveys have brought out are as follows:

Last year the total dwelling construction programme in Philadelphia produced only 623 family accommodations, of which only 339 were from local stimulation. The remainder were the result of federal activity. The new family accommodations for the past 5 years totaled only 4,432 units when normal construction should have provided 26,000; and when the preceding 5-year period provided 56,772 family accommodations. Last year I pointed out that the then 5-year record was only 15% of the preceding 5 years, whereas in 60 other American cities the corresponding percentage was 36%. Thus there has been not only a phenomenal slump in Philadelphia in dwelling construction, but it has been more than twice as great as in other cities for which corresponding records are available.

Moreover, during the past year 1,540 family accommodations were demolished. These structures together with 56 other buildings that housed quasi-family groups withdrew living quarters for 7,975 persons. The 5-year record shows a loss of 5,875 family accommodations and a withdrawal of living quarters for 33,000 persons. Incidentally, a 12-year record, for 1923 to 1934 inclusive, shows a loss of 11,308 accommodations for 72,000 persons. We have thus had a steadily increasing number of houses destroyed and a steadily decreasing number of houses built.

THE EXTENT OF DOUBLING UP

In consequence of these subnormal construction and abnormal demolition programmes, there has appeared a noticeable reduction in the vacancy rate. The Social Survey #4, Local Works Division, under the direction of Edward R. Feicht and Ralph W. Smith, reported 507,667 family accommodations in Philadelphia. Last spring this survey found 49,096 family accommodations vacant. This appears to be a high figure and one might be led to believe that there are ample accommodations to serve all families now living in the city, or who may be expected to live in the city for several years to come. However, the fact is that in these 507,667 family accommodations there are 26,470 extra families living with other families. Such families heretofore had

their own households. They will want them again and may be expected to seek them as soon as they are employed.

Of these family accommodations 16,600 were unfit for use, and 10,112 other accommodations were so substandard structurally that they are unrecoverable for normal family living. Here is a total of 53,182 family accommodations needed, as contrasted with the 49,086 vacant. If we accept a 5% vacancy rate as normal, Philadelphia is now lacking over 28,000 family accommodations.

THE NEED

And this does not allow any family accommodations to care for population growth; for demands created by the normal urge for better homes; for demands created by a return of families to the city who temporarily took accommodations with relatives elsewhere; for demands resulting from demolitions due to city or utility improvements; nor for demands arising from the 13,671 marriage licenses issued last year.

Furthermore, this same survey reported over 67,000 family accommodations in Philadelphia so infested with nuisances that under normal conditions most tenants would not tolerate them but would move. While in this number are included the unfit family accommodations previously mentioned, there are not included many thousands of houses with inadequate equipment, that lack either plumbing, water supply, toilets, bathtubs, or drainage. There were 35,354 family accommodations without bathtubs; 2,048 without water supply; 2,984 without heat; 33,843 heated only by stoves; 33,450 without indoor water closets, and 4,424 served only by privy vaults.*

These figures include some of the overcrowded houses but not all. The survey rated 62,684 houses as overcrowded, over 3,000 of which averaged 3 or more persons per room.

It appears from the foregoing that the housing supply of fit structures with minimum required sanitary equipment is definitely inadequate, and is inadequate even when no account is taken of extra families. No matter what our prejudices may be, we cannot face these facts without acknowledging that taken en masse there is an under-supply of safe and sanitary housing in Philadelphia today.

Of course an en masse picture of vacancies does not give a true picture. The total unoccupied accommodations should be separated into groups and a judgment made of oversupply or shortage, as the

* In interpreting these figures allowance must be made for duplication of properties having two or more such defects.

case may be, by comparing the quantity of houses by price-range with the distribution of the population by income brackets. By such measurement it will be noted that among houses fit for occupancy there is an oversupply in the higher ranges and an undersupply of medium and lower priced accommodations.

THE RENTAL SITUATION

On the other hand, there are factors that raise legitimate doubts as to the timeliness of a building programme. One of these arises from the rental situation. The last rent survey of homes occupied by industrial workers, made by the Philadelphia Housing Association in December, 1934, showed that rents had decreased for 29.5% of the houses during 1934; while 67.7% reported no rental change; and 2.8% reported an increase. This is the highest percentage of increases since 1930 and the lowest percentage of decreases since 1927. The curve of rent changes downward is paralleling the reverse curve during the previous decade when rents were increasing. The low point reached in 1934 promises an upward trend in rental rates, a stiffening of the rental market, a decreased demand for adjustment downward by tenants seeking accommodations.

A second of these factors appears in the large County Relief roll, stated in families and single persons to exceed 100,000. In 1934, before the payment of rent relief, a large percentage of these families were not paying rent or were paying rent intermittently, as indeed were other families not on relief. However, the rent survey showed that this situation in 1934 was not as acute as it had been in 1933.

A third adverse influence is unemployment. It is stated that on June 15, 1934, there were in Philadelphia 305,000 unemployed persons, or 33.4% of those usually gainfully employed. Such persons and their families are definitely out of the house-buying market. And since the building programme in Philadelphia has been largely one that catered to home buyers, it might seem that the large unemployment total is definitely against a programme of new construction.

THE POTENTIAL MARKET

Notwithstanding, however, the number of unemployed, there are over 500,000 persons in Philadelphia now employed. Many of the employed have saved money. The large funds in savings and bank accounts represent a high potential investment possibility. The desire for home ownership provides a strong inducement to buy, to which a sales appeal can be made, especially if the homes built are reasonable

and of good quality. The fact that second-hand houses are priced today far below their inherent value is not the deterrent it is believed to be, for in the Philadelphia market new houses have always held a preferential position. The adverse condition of the mortgage market which in 1934 was shown by only \$30,554,541 worth of recorded mortgages, other than on houses sold by the Sheriff, as compared with \$291,645,606 in 1925 is explained more by an unwillingness of lending agencies to make loans than by an unwillingness of the public to buy houses. If the mortgage lending institutions have agreed to lend money on insured mortgages to the extent that the Federal Housing Administrator's publicity alleges, this major barrier to a better market will be materially lowered. But I am informed by builders that these alleged agreements are merely paper pledges.

Similarly there are other indices of an adverse situation for new housing in the \$40,000,000 of delinquent taxes and in the continued high number of sheriff sales, which last year totaled 15,272 dwellings only 45 of which were sold for delinquent taxes. Such indices become less significant when it is remembered that the tax delinquents responsible for the heavier amounts are those who own non-residential properties or apartment structures. Also, sheriff sales have noticeably fallen off. In 1934 there were 3,166 fewer houses sold than during 1933. The number of such sales constitutes a serious threat, notwithstanding that they now reflect in many cases increased confidence in a better real estate market among mortgagees rather than greater distress among mortgagors.

There are other factors which affect the situation; and while it is true they deserve consideration, yet their significance, taken separately or combined, is less today than last year or than the year before, for then they were increasing while now they are decreasing.

THE SITUATION

It appears that we have, on the one hand, a definite housing shortage which is increasing; we have a lower supply of houses than 5 years ago; we have an abnormally high number of substandard structures which are unrecoverable either for hygienic family-living or for reasonable earning power; we have a mounting volume of bank deposits that could be turned into home investments when the supply of houses for such purpose is of the type, price and in the right location to appeal to buyers; we have a volume of employed persons who with their families make up a population equal to the total population of a city the size of Cleveland, an employed population which normally would pro-

vide a market that any average builder would seize upon if building mortgage funds and home-buying mortgage aids were made available.

We have admitted there are adverse influences which deserve careful consideration, but they point to a conservative building programme and not to a cessation of building. On the other hand, there are other adverse influences not arising from legitimate causes which are dangerous because they are primarily selfish. I refer to the opposition to new construction from those who own or manage large numbers of sub-standard houses. They believe they should be protected from the competition which modern housing presents, that they are entitled to sell the houses they control at the prices paid on purchase, taking no account of the loss due to deterioration or obsolescence, nor deducting from the ownership costs excess earnings made during peak earning periods.

OLD LAMPS *Or* NEW

Furthermore, the most powerful adverse influence comes from former mortgagees who are now title holders of the homes they foreclosed. They have always been the real owners by virtue of larger equities through mortgages than the cash equities of the owners of record, but they seldom viewed their investments in such light. Now, as owners of record also, they clamor for a housing shortage to help them unload their unwanted burdens. And strange as it may seem, this group is sufficiently influential to retard new dwelling construction. These owners will not admit that any forward movement of real estate depends upon the encouragement of buyers who do not want an old house that has been daubed with paint and camouflaged with paper to hide its defects but leaving it an old house just the same, with years of deterioration to subtract from its value. Such houses are second-hand goods and are the only goods on the market that claim a right to the prices of new goods. Moreover, these owners will not see that a new construction programme, with a sales market to appeal to potential buyers among the half million employed wage earners in the city—which means wages paid to building trades workers, dollars passed to material men and workers who fabricate building materials, to transportation companies who move such materials, to stores and to the city in taxes—will start an upward swing that will benefit all real estate.

Truly intelligent programming for new dwelling construction and an aggressive sales campaign to reach those who have accumulated savings accounts and desire new homes, will yield quick results even to those who, with fatuous tenacity, adhere to the negative policy of waiting until a housing shortage forces an upward swing in prices.

New housing is needed in Philadelphia today. New housing provided for a buying market with a sales price of not over \$5,000 will find buyers; and if mortgage funds are available to help finance such buyers, there will be an ample demand for the products of builders who have a reputation for erecting satisfactory dwellings. Such construction will serve both a social and an economic need.

BERNARD J. NEWMAN
Philadelphia

PREVENTING COUNTY SLUMS

The problem of slum prevention in the unincorporated areas surrounding Cincinnati has for a long time constituted a real challenge. Already three bad slum spots have developed. As is the case in most counties throughout the country there is no legislative power to deal with the existing situation; and what is worse, no means of preventing the development of more slums in these outlying areas. There are now before the legislature of Ohio two bills which if enacted would constitute important steps in controlling the situation, particularly for the future.

One is a County Sub-division Bill which would give the County Commissioners the power to require sewers, water, some kind of hard surface paving and an acceptable street lay-out for all such sub-divisions. This bill has passed the House and is before the Senate.

The other bill would give the County Commissioners in counties having city planning commissions, the power to adopt zoning regulations suitable for such areas. The zoning bill has been reported out of the Senate Committee but has not yet been put on the calendar. At the present time the outlook seems to be good for the enactment of the sub-division bill but gloomy for the zoning bill. The City and Regional Planning Commission, the Regional Planning Council of Hamilton County and the Better Housing League are fighting hard to try to get both bills through the legislature.

At the election next November the voters of Hamilton County will vote on a Home Rule charter. The County Charter Commission has already made a number of important decisions on fundamental provisions of the charter. Among other things there will be a board of County Commissioners of five members, a county executive appointed by the Board with department heads appointed by the County Executive and a complete rearrangement of county departments. Civil ser-

vice requirements and a Civil Service Commission will be set up. Provision will be made so that municipalities may contract to have any municipal services rendered by the county where satisfactory agreements can be reached. The new charter will give definite status to the County Planning Commission whose powers are now very limited and largely dependent upon the voluntary cooperation of political subdivisions of the county. Important as the Charter provision on county planning is, the enactment of necessary state legislation is even more vital; since it has been decided that it would be inadvisable to try to include in the Charter legislative powers for the County Commissioners, as a huge majority vote would be required to carry it.

The problem of housing regulations cannot of course be met satisfactorily until provision is made for building and housing regulations and a building department. This will have to be done either by later amendment to the Charter or by state law.

BLEECKER MARQUETTE, Exec. Sec.,
Cincinnati Better Housing League

SLUM CLEARANCE IN CINCINNATI

Plans for the \$7,000,000 slum clearance and low-cost housing project in Cincinnati are crystalizing. There is every reason to believe that the site will be definitely determined in the near future, the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority having already made recommendations, which it is hoped will prove acceptable to the Federal Housing Division.

A vacancy survey to secure a list of satisfactory vacant accommodations which will be available for the tenants that may be dispossessed from the existing site is now under way. Careful check will be made by the Building Department to see to it that the accommodations recommended are not in unfit buildings.

Rents in the new project will not be definitely known until the buildings are actually constructed. It is planned that the rent will include the cost of heat, electricity and refrigeration. Studies made by the Better Housing League show that these three items cost families now living in Cincinnati tenements \$1.50 per room per month. It is hoped that the net rental for housing alone will not exceed the average rental for the low-income groups in normal times.

The Cincinnati Housing Authority is now preparing for submission an application for a considerable sum to continue its slum clear-

ance work in accordance with a careful West End redevelopment plan worked out two years ago. Inasmuch as each project will reduce the density of population, the Housing Authority will consider recommending some low-cost housing on vacant land—at least sufficient to make up for the amount of housing accommodations permanently eliminated.

Evidence is already beginning to develop that vacancies are decreasing. The Cincinnati Model Homes Co. which a year ago had more than 100 vacancies now has less than 25. Vacancies in Mariemont have definitely decreased. A survey of certain of the tenement areas also shows decreasing vacancies. It is not improbable that with the vacation and condemnation of unfit buildings steadily taking place, together with the undoubling of families now doubled up, an actual shortage of decent accommodations is not far off. A comprehensive unemployment survey now being made under the auspices of the Regional Department of Economic Security will include data on vacancies and rents. It is expected that the results of this survey for the tenement areas will be made available sometime during the summer.

Careful surveys are now being made of two of the shack slums in the county area with the possibility that under the additional funds it is hoped to get from the Federal Government, one of these slum areas may be included for elimination.

BLEECKER MARQUETTE, Exec. Sec.,
Cincinnati Better Housing League

PSYCHOANALYZING THE HOME

A Philadelphia architect of modernistic tendencies, William Lescaze, added to the gaiety of nations last winter—and certainly gave the architectural profession much to think about—when he suggested that in future when a man decided to build his home, before the architect set pencil to paper, the owner should submit to being psychoanalyzed.

That this was not solely a publicity stunt or means of attracting attention to the availability of the architect in question—it is not “ethical” for architects to advertise—was evidenced by the statement that he made at the time when his suggestion was given publicity. In this connection Mr. Lescaze was quoted as follows:

In the old days it was a common occurrence to have persons come into the office with photographs or clippings of a house they had

decided was just right for them. But while an architect wishes to know his client's taste in architecture, it is much more to the point to find out his traits and how he spends his time, so that the plans may be drawn to fit his particular needs.

Some persons, either for efficiency's sake or from laziness may prefer compact rooms with all modern "gadgets" to save time and energy. Others like spaciousness and prefer to putter about, in the house or on the grounds outside.

Perhaps the cost of an extra bathroom, which some families would not do without, ought to be spent on a tennis court or a game room.

The height of the parents and their tastes would have a direct bearing on the number and placement of bookshelves and the character of other built-in furniture.

The members of some families prefer to be off to themselves, with their own entrances to their rooms, their own baths, and other means of assuring quiet and privacy.

If there is prospect or hope of a larger family, the design might be arranged so as to permit construction of additional rooms without spoiling the architectural beauty of the home.

In order to plan the home intelligently, Mr. Lescaze has prepared a questionnaire which he expects his prospective client to fill out—at any rate, he says he does. Through this questionnaire he expects to learn in advance whether the members of a particular family are gregarious or prefer quiet and privacy; what their favorite amusements are, how much leisure they have, the kind of clothes worn by the mother, their smoking and drinking habits, their color preferences and the likelihood of more children.

Taking his cue from this interesting statement, as published in the New York papers, H. I. Phillips, through his column, "*The Sun Dial*", published every night in the *New York Sun*, makes merry with these suggestions in the following fashion:

("Home builders should be psycho-analyzed says William Lescaze, New York architect, proposing questionnaires to determine tastes and requirements as builders."—News Item.)

1. How many people are there in your family and are there any two alike.

2. Have you a gadget complex or don't you mind if there are no wall attachments for opening bottles?

3. What do you consider the relative importance of contract bridge, home gardening, week-end house parties, radio programmes?

4. Are you a moderate drinker or will you need wider corridors?

5. Do you keep a dog? If so, is it a lapdog or will a special extension be necessary? What place does an animal hold in your affections with respect to your children and neighbors?

6. Would you kill an architect who failed to take into consideration the comfort of a Great Dane and its importance in one's home life?

7. Check the clause which properly completes the following: If I fell downstairs, I would—

- (a) Call a physician.
- (b) Notify the insurance company.
- (c) Write a letter to the newspapers.
- (d) Call up the architect and bawl him out?

8. Give a brief statement expressing yourself on the relative importance in family life of the following institutions:

- (a) A Roman bathroom in colored tile.
- (b) A tennis court.
- (c) Ample guest rooms.
- (d) A rock garden and fish pool.
- (e) A good heating plant.
- (f) A home putting green.

9. Have you ever had any great tragedy in your life or have you been careful not to buy a suburban home from the real estate agent's description?

10. Do you go in for week-end house parties or will no steel reinforcements of the buildings be necessary.

11. Are you an outdoor bug who carries the craving for a tropical tan to the point of fanaticism or will you want a house sufficiently large to give you a feeling of comfort when you are indoors?

12. Do you smoke a pipe or will the installation of mechanical blowers and air purifiers be unessential to the comfort of your wife and her mother?

13. Is this your first owned home or have you been disappointed in real estate so often that nothing an architect may do can make you happy?

14. Do you and your wife get along peacefully as a rule or should the walls be sound proofed?

15. Has there been any insanity in your family or hasn't any member of it ever fallen a victim of the conviction that in the ideal American home the bathrooms should be larger and more numerous and more beautiful than the other rooms?

16. Is a good view an obsession or don't you care what goes on in the neighboring homes?

17. Will you require ample book shelves or are you and your children average Americans?

Mr. Phillips is by no means the only humorist who has been intrigued with these suggestions. Kenneth Murchison, the New York architect who no longer, alas! publishes that joyous page, "*Hors de*

Concours'', in the *Architectural Forum* holds forth with regard to these suggestions of Mr. Lescaze's in the following fashion:

Architects are getting nose—yes, nose. They are trying to find out more about their clients than the clients know about themselves!

The Vignola of Lescaze. It was that daring young Swiss, William Lescaze, now of New York and Philadelphia, who started this business. He maintains that anyone contemplating building a house should be analyzed and insists that the client should answer a questionnaire before he, Lescaze, puts a 6B pencil on paper.

That is a swell idea, for it may possibly result in the architect getting something on the client which might come in handy towards the end of the job. You know—something to suggest if the going gets rough!

Far be it from a feuilletonist like this to suggest anything bearing even a taint, a sniff, a faint aroma of a stick-up game, but there it is, and Architect Lescaze should receive the thanks of the profession at large for the idea alone. According to a newspaper, he asks every new client the following questions before starting the design:

1. Are you lazy?
2. How tall are you?
3. Do you like family privacy?
4. What are your pastimes?

He forgot to ask them:

5. Have you got enough money to do this job right?
6. Are you a female with a domineering personality?
7. Do you know the difference between a kitchen sink and the back stairs when you see them on a blue print?
8. Do you hate architects as a general rule or just at the end of a job?

DETAILS. We are dwelling upon these questions to a perhaps unreasonable length because this is a professional magazine and we feel in duty bound to make the pathway of every architect's life less rugged. Let us make a few full-size details:

1. Laziness. Mr. Lescaze thinks that if the client is lazy, then the architect should eliminate extra gadgets, hard-to-clean spaces, and waste space in the kitchen. I would also add: provide a passenger elevator; Murphy beds in the parlor (in case of complete disability), and spring hinges on all the doors.

2. Height. Whether or not you or the cook be tall or short, the plumbing supply houses will still furnish you with back-breaking lavatories and kitchen sinks; the plumbers will set the medicine cabinets so that when you open the door you will always knock the glass of water off the glass shelf; and finally, no five-foot-six bathtub is five-foot-six.

3. Privacy. There is no such thing so you might as well stop kidding yourself about it.

4. Pastimes. Let's be decent about this one and let it go at that. All that Mr. Lescaze wanted to know was: Is most of the back seat driving done at home or in the car? Should the architect specify hard wood or something softer?

Questions 5, 6, 7 and 8 are really not so important, because an answer of "yes" would automatically disbar any client unless said client would pay the architect 15 per cent commission, out of which the architect could afford to pay for a sizable accident insurance policy.

A FASCINATING SUBJECT. May we go on further?

9. "Are the members of the family bored in each other's presence?

"Many a divorce could have been prevented if husband and wife didn't have to look at each other all the time; or, if mother could have gotten out of reach of the children's noise, she could have been a pleasanter wife in the evening."

In other words, a nice padded cell for mother!

Again may we quote?

"The list of questions runs into great length, including such things as the likelihood of having more children, the frequency of relatives' visits, smoking and drinking habits of the family, ambitions of the children, interest in sun bathing, appreciation of sunsets. . . ."

A SUGGESTION. We really can't go on. We are overcome at the vista which is opened up. A very complete comedy might be written about the building of a house on the Lescaze-clean-breast system, the first act being in the architect's office, the second act being in the architect's office, and the third act being the same as acts one and two. In other words, the house would never get outside of the architect's office and both the architect and the client would be so exhausted by questions and answers that they would finally give it up as a bad job and would live happily ever afterwards 3,000 miles apart.

The paper went on to state that "the use of stilts was a perfectly rational one. . . ." Did they mean for the house or for the architect? We're up a tree.

SELLING MODERNIZATION TO THE PEOPLE

BY THE FEDERAL HOUSING ADMINISTRATION

Congress last summer passed the National Housing Act. Its purpose was to bring back American prosperity by creating new business for the construction industry all over the country. And it had to accomplish that. In sponsoring it President Roosevelt and Congress went on the theory that permanent prosperity would come only when the heavy goods industries were prospering, and that this could be most quickly brought about by stimulating building.

Two nation-wide activities—the modernization of homes and business properties and the construction of new homes—are the two major parts of the Housing Administration's Better Housing Programme.

The country had to be organized and aroused to the advisability of modernization; and property owners who lacked the money to finance the work were to borrow it from lending institutions who would be glad to accommodate, in view of the Housing Administration's insuring them against loss from such loans.

The home construction programme was more involved. It was all right to proclaim from the housetops that from one to five million new housetops were needed for the proper and comfortable housing of all us Americans. But it was something else to find people who would rear these housetops at a time when real estate was in the dumps and the home mortgage market had gone moribund.

So the Housing Administration developed a brand new nation-wide insured standardized home mortgage system. Its purpose was to bring the mortgage market to life and make home building attractive as an investment. In order that these standard insured mortgages would find a ready market, provision was made for the creation of National Mortgage Associations to deal in them.

Another feature of the act made possible the insuring of mortgages that were made to finance low-cost housing projects—such as apartment houses or groups of dwellings bringing in comparatively low rentals.

But when the Housing Administration first took the field, the country as a whole did not know what the Housing Act meant. Home owners had to be told why modernization at this time was a great and precious gift, and how they could borrow the money to accomplish it.

Banks and other lending institutions also had to be told why and how they could have "frozen" mortgages insured and made liquid. Prospective home owners had to be acquainted with the procedure necessary to finance their buildings through insured mortgages. Business men had to be educated in the possible opportunities to be found in conducting national mortgage associations.

The Housing Administrator, James A. Moffett, perceived at the outset the necessity of starting a nation-wide educational movement to tell the American people why and how they benefit by the opportunities offered by the Housing Act.

He soon had two and three shifts on the job of preparing and turning out leaflets, pamphlets and booklets. He took advantage of every possible channel of publicity—and is still doing it—newspapers, magazines, radio, motion pictures, billboards, mass meetings and parades.

It is no exaggeration to say that this educational work went, and is still going, not only into every community but into every household that keeps up an average contact with national and community affairs.

If at this time there is anybody in this country who has not heard or read something about the Housing Act, it must be due to the fact that there are still among the people a brigade who have ears that will not hear and eyes that are blindfolded.

But education and information alone could not do this job of moving a nation into quick step to get to its neglected building jobs. The country had to be *organized*. It had to be organized from top to bottom in effective detail so that everybody would be directly summoned to get in on the Better Housing Programme.

HOW IT WAS ORGANIZED

With the Housing Administration in Washington as the top, the organization was built up in the following way:

Twelve (12) Regional Directors were appointed, the boundaries of each Region being determined largely by the size and population of the respective states.

The twelve Regional Directors in cooperation with the Housing Administration appointed State Directors. In some of the larger states there were District Directors.

Next came the Chairmen of the community Better Housing Committees. They were appointed through cooperation of the Directors and the Housing Administration.

At first, all towns and cities with a population of 10,000 or more were given their community chairmen who immediately set about the work of selecting their committees. The local organizations correspond, roughly speaking, to the usual community body brought into existence for the purpose of putting over any campaign or movement for civic betterment.

There are in the United States only 982 towns with but 10,000 population and they were soon organized and hard at work promoting Better Housing. Then the organization work spread to the smaller towns. Today more than 7,400 community committee chairmen have been appointed. Of this number 6,083 have developed organizations and put them to work.

Their first concern was the modernization and repair programme, since this was the emergency or quick-action part of the Better Housing movement, and under the law its functioning was to end on December 31, 1935. The idea back of this was that since modernization and repair could be undertaken immediately, it would promptly create new business for the building industry, while the slower moving New Home

Construction plan was got under way. From the very start things worked out as intended.

Local committees soon discovered that the only way to secure the maximum of modernization and repair work was through the house-to-house canvass.

Publicity arouses interest. Addresses to mass meetings and over the radio broadcast the details of a plan. Parades are good shows and bring people out and impress upon them the fact that the thing advertised touches them all. But the house-to-house canvass is the sure-fire system by which the property owner's signature is put on the dotted line and he is pledged to undertake promptly the work specified.

The local committees found also that the best results were obtained through canvassers who understood building and architecture. Going a step further they found that those lines of building and repairs gained most from a campaign that put the representatives of those industries to work as canvassers. Such lines as plumbing, heating and interior decorating came back with the biggest pledges for their respective kinds of work when their representatives had contacted the property owners.

Another thing that made the modernization campaign quickly effective was the simplicity with which the repair work was financed. Any property owner could borrow up to \$2,000 from a private lending institution for modernization purposes if he was a reliable person and had a steady income or earning power justifying the assumption that he could conveniently pay off the debt in equal monthly instalments spread over a period of 5 years.

Those lending institutions that were approved by the Housing Administration to do modernization lending were insured against loss from these "character loans".

But it was not only the lenders of money and the owners of homes and business properties that benefited from modernization. As expected, it built up big business for industry.

There were certain wide-awake corporations that saw the business possibilities of modernization as soon as the plan was given to the country. Notable among them were firms manufacturing such products as roofing, plumbing and heating material and equipment. They soon began to report big business increases.

QUICK RESULTS

For the months of November, December and January last, some of them informed the Housing Administration that their business showed

an increase of from 100% to 300 and even 400% over the corresponding months of the previous year.

It did not take long for the good news to get about, and by the time the building season really opened up in the spring of 1935 the heavy goods industries were proclaiming Better Housing as the restorer of national prosperity.

The Housing Administration soon saw, however, that the loan limit of \$2,000 was too small for the larger industries to get much help out of the insured lending plan so far as their own modernizing work was concerned. It therefore asked Congress to increase the limit to \$50,000.

As this is written,* the legislation making the change is in conference between the House and the Senate, and there seems to be no doubt that it will soon be sent to the White House for the President's signature.

It is easy to realize how this will increase the volume of industrial modernization. For the past 5 years the industries of the country have been doing little or no repair or replacement. They have got along the best they could with plants that were steadily deteriorating and with equipment that was becoming more and more obsolete. The result is that today the nation's industries are paying a costly toll to out-of-date equipment and ramshackle buildings. They are in many instances obliged now to modernize, and those which have not the necessary money in their treasuries will be only too glad to take advantage of the \$50,000 loan limit.

A feature of building development which any up and coming town can emulate is the community pledge such as has been made by Los Angeles and other cities. The business men of the town pledge themselves to see that their community undertakes at once a certain volume of work. Los Angeles has pledged itself to do \$100,000,000 worth of modernization and new construction.

The construction of new homes is the permanent part of the Better Housing Programme. It is intended primarily to supply the American home shortage and thereafter maintain the nation's normal home building rate. It is safe to say that the home shortage numbers now about 2,500,000 dwellings.

MELTING FROZEN CREDIT

A major cause of the American depression was the "frozen" mortgage. Banks and other lending institutions were over-loaded with mortgages which nobody wanted to invest in, and which covered prop-

* May 13.—Editor.

erty that nobody wanted to buy. In other words, the old-fashioned short-term mortgage had not been equal to the strain when the depression came along. It was obvious that nobody would undertake any new home construction to an appreciable extent until the home mortgage market was revived.

To remedy all these evils, the Housing Administration developed the nation-wide mutually insured standard mortgage. It agrees to insure 100% any mortgage for a sum up to 80% of the value of the property on which it is issued, the mortgage to run as long as 20 years and to be paid off in equal monthly instalments of about the same amount that would be required to rent a house of that type and cost.

To get such a mortgage the home buyer must be able to make a down payment of at least 20% of the value of the property. This is a precaution to prevent issuance of the insured mortgages to people who are not sufficiently thrifty or not possessed of enough income or earning power to go through with the discharge of the debt.

But the Housing Administration does not stop with insuring new mortgages. It will insure the old short-term mortgages if the borrowers and lenders will get together and rewrite them according to the rules and regulations of the Administration.

Going still further the Administration insures mortgages on low-cost housing projects, thus making it practical and convenient to finance the building of a type of apartments and small group dwellings for which there is a tremendous demand throughout the country.

Then, to round out the programme the Housing Administration will establish national mortgage associations to deal in the mortgages which it insures. At this writing, no national mortgage association has been set up, but such organizations will come along as soon as the volume of insured mortgages warrants the development.

The rules and regulations governing this whole New Construction Programme were not issued until last November. It was found then that the states would have to pass varying amounts of enabling legislation before the programme could operate fully.

Moreover, the educational campaign to broadcast the benefits of the New Construction Programme did not get fully under way until last winter, the first emphasis having been on Modernization and Repair. Now, however, public appreciation of the possibilities of the new mortgage system is bearing fruit.

Applications have already come in to the Housing Administration for \$200,000,000 worth of insured mortgages on low-cost housing projects and for more than \$41,000,000 on 1-to-4-family projects. The insured modernization loans to date amount to more than \$70,000,000.

For every dollar represented in the insured modernization loans, several dollars in cash have been spent by property owners. It is conservatively estimated that since the Modernization Programme was launched last August at least \$400,000,000 has been spent in modernizing and repair work.

But popular as the Housing Administration's programme is becoming, the fact remains that there are many millions of property owners and business men in this country today who either are not awake to the opportunities presented by the Housing Act or for some reason neglect to take advantage of them.

Consequently, the Administration's campaign of education is kept up. For the Administration to offer its benefits and yet not tell the country about them would be stupidly wasteful. It is as much its duty to tell what it can do as to perform those duties. This is why the community which organizes its Better Housing Programme committee can get from the Housing Administration all the educational material it needs—such as posters, leaflets and booklets covering practically every phase of the Housing Act.

In this connection it should be pointed out that not the Housing Administration but private enterprise and capital pay for the tremendous amount of newspaper and magazine advertising in the housing field. American business and industry having realized how great are their opportunities under the Housing Act, want to cash in on them to the utmost of their ability. They know that one of the best ways to do this is through printer's ink in the publications the people read.

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